



Public Engagement and the Neighbourhood Quarrel Surrounding  
the Planned Windmill Park in the Noordoostpolder

The Participation Discrepancy

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to take a critical look at the role of the public in the development of wind energy production in the Netherlands. The role of the public has been captured here under the umbrella of public engagement. The influence and involvement of the public can be set apart in three types of public engagement; based on the direction of the flow of information *public information*, *public consultation* and *public participation* can be recognized. Public participation distinguishes itself from the other two because it implies a *deliberative interaction* between the initiator and the public. However, forms of public information and consultation are also often called participation. This paper shows, based on a case study of the planned windmill park in the Noordoostpolder (The Netherlands), how the terminology, if used wrongly, can give a false sense of public engagement. This problem is enhanced by the fact that one can also participate in the windmill project in a purely financial way, while this might give an increased feeling of commitment to the project; it has nothing to do with the engagement in the area of policy-making this paper is concerned with.

Furthermore, the case study makes clear that although the engagement of the public might be highly recommended (from a theoretical as well as practical perspective) its appliance can not be taken for granted. While the Dutch government favours public engagement and the initiators of the windmill park are seeking for ways to increase the social support for the project, the case of the Noordoostpolder shows that it is not always clear how the public can be involved.

Key Words: Public Engagement, Public Participation, Windmill Park Noordoostpolder, Financial Participation, Legal Trajectory



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## Abbreviations

AZ:	Algemene Zaken, Dutch ministry of General Affairs
EIA:	Environmental Impact Assessment <sup>1</sup>
EZ:	Economische Zaken, Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs
GHG:	Greenhouse Gas (e.g. CO <sub>2</sub> )
IA:	Integrated Assessment
LNV:	Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit, Dutch ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality
NIMBY:	Not-In-My-Backyard
NMP4:	Nationaal Milieubeleidsplan 4, the fourth national environmental policy plan of the Netherlands
OCW:	Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, Dutch ministry of Education, Culture and Science
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RES:	Renewable Energy Systems
STS:	Science and Technology Studies <sup>2</sup>
UNECE:	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
VROM:	Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer, Dutch ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment

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<sup>1</sup> In Dutch this is called a m.e.r.: milieu effect rapportage.

<sup>2</sup> This meaning for STS was derived from Jasanoff, Markle, Petersen and Pinch (Eds. 1995), other definitions also exist, e.g. 'Science-Technology-Society Studies (Jensen, Lauritsen and Olesen 2007) and sometimes even medicine is integrated (Bijker 2003).





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## 1. Introduction

Since the 1990s plans have been developed to build the largest windmill park of the Netherlands in the Noordoostpolder; partly on land and partly in the water of the IJsselmeer. Especially the neighbouring community of Urk is not pleased about this and often attracts attention from the media with their protests. They feel as if the plans for the park have been forced upon them; raising questions about the engagement of the locals in the process.

Public engagement in science and technology (policy) is increasingly important and popular, developing in line with the increasing emphasis on democratization (Rowe and Frewer 2000), but also because laypeople can have certain knowledge not known by experts (Kleinman 2005, Hagendijk and Irwin 2006, or see Wynne 1989 for an example case). Within this thesis it is the overall objective to take a look at the role of the public within the area of wind energy production in the Netherlands. Since 'in the last twenty-five years, public participation has become more significant in energy and natural resources development, and in environmental management generally' (Barton 2002, p. 77), and because a focus on public engagement and on sustainable development often seems to go hand in hand,<sup>3</sup> it is interesting to look at the connection between these two in the Netherlands.

In the literature and among experts in public participation there does not seem to be a real dispute about the necessity of the engagement of the public<sup>4</sup>; the discussion mainly focuses on

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<sup>3</sup> When searching for public participation/engagement literature many of the texts have a relation to sustainable development (e.g. Kasemir, Jäger, Jaeger and Gardner 2003b, Jamison and Østby 1997, Zillman, Lucas and Pring 2002). Since environmental issues have a high social relevance they are also well suited for public engagement, and the interest of the public to engage is big (also confirmed by practical experience in citizen participation projects by the Dutch government (Stapels, interview)).

<sup>4</sup> Renn, Webler and Wiedemann (1995a) describe a meeting with twenty-two experts in the field of public participation: 'All the invited scholars from academia, international research institutes, and governmental agencies agreed on one fundamental principle: For environmental policies to be effective and legitimate, we need to involve the people who are or will be affected by the outcomes of these policies. There is no technocratic solution to this problem. Without public involvement, environmental policies are doomed to fail.' (Renn, Webler and Wiedemann 1995a, p. xiii).

the questions of how to involve the public and how far the public's influence must reach (Renn, Webler, Rakel, Dienel and Branden 1993). This thesis aims at contributing to this discussion, and to take a look at how this works in real life, because as Kørnøvn (2007, p. 720) puts it: 'there is in general a support for the idea of public participation, but it can be difficult to ensure that it actually happens and works satisfactorily.'

Since the rising oil prices in the 1970s, due to a supply slowdown made by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), we have become aware of the limitations of fossil fuels, and of the importance of a continuous supply of energy (Caputo 2009). Empowered by the increasing threat of climate change caused by man-made changes of the atmospheric composition (e.g. increased emission of GHGs (greenhouse gasses, of which carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is the most important one) (IPCC 2007)), the importance of renewable energy sources has become ever more visible (Weber 2008). Enhanced by the agreements manifested in the Kyoto-protocol and the in 2007 introduced EU goals of 20 20 by 2020<sup>5</sup>, renewable energy has also become an important item in the Netherlands, shown in the Coalition Agreement of the fourth Cabinet Balkenende (AZ 2007).

In an attempt to work towards these goals the Dutch government in 2001 presented the cabinet paper 'Een wereld en een wil: Werken aan duurzaamheid' (Where there is a will, there's a world: Working on sustainability) (NMP4 2001<sup>6</sup>). In this paper the cabinet presents its plans and goals for the long-term future. The NMP4 recognizes that the transition to a sustainable energy supply will require a large societal effort, and therefore a wide public

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<sup>5</sup> It has become a European Union target to have 20% less GHG emission, 20% more renewable energy, and 20% more energy efficiency by 2020: <http://ec.europa.eu/climateaction/> (Retrieved 30 June 2009).

<sup>6</sup> A summary of this report is also available in a number of other languages, see: <http://www.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=9334> (22 June 2009).

support will be needed; via initiatives such as *'Beleid met burgers'*<sup>7</sup> (policy with citizens) the government tries to achieve this.

Although it has been the idea in the beginning of this research to take a broad view on renewable energy systems, time limitations and a desire to go somewhat more into detail steered the project in the direction of one specific type. The choice was made to focus on wind energy. This has been done particularly because wind energy is one of the focus areas in the Netherlands when it comes to renewable energy (VROM 2008a, 2008b, 2009), and because in 2007 the contribution of wind energy grew strongly while the overall production of renewable energy in the Netherlands stagnated (CBS 2008), illustrating the importance of windmills for the transition to a sustainable energy production. The windmill park in the Noordoostpolder<sup>8</sup> provided some promising perspectives for a case study and was therefore chosen as the example case for this research.

## 1.1. Research questions

The research scope of this thesis is two-fold. In the first place there is a focus on public engagement as a concept; as the theoretical description below will point out, it is rather vague, and its borders are not very clear. The first goal of this thesis is to address this and, by means of a concrete case study, discuss the influence such blurred boundaries have on the use of the terminology.

On the other side there is the case study as such. Here it is possible to take a look at public engagement in real life and see how the public has been involved in this specific case. It can

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<sup>7</sup> See: <http://www.vrom.nl/pagina.html?id=16572> (only in Dutch) (22 June 2009).

<sup>8</sup> The case study will be introduced more detailed below, but for some background information see: <http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/> and <http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/> (unfortunately both websites only provide information in Dutch).

then be examined whether more or less involvement of the general public would have been desirable and how public engagement can actually be applied.

The main research questions for this thesis are:

What can be the role of public engagement in the development of a windmill park?

Which lessons can be learned from the case of the Noordoostpolder?

In order to answer these rather broad questions a number of sub questions will have to be addressed:

1. What is public engagement?
2. What are the positive and negative effects of public engagement?
3. What is, or could be, the role of “the public” on the development of a windmill park?
  - § What positive or negative influences does the public have on the development?
  - § In which stage should the public be involved, and what type and/or level of public engagement is then desirable?
  - § What barriers or difficulties might have to be overcome?
4. Why is public engagement desirable (or not; or only at certain stages of the process) in the development of renewable energy systems?



## 1.2. Significance

The topic of public engagement is ideally suited for discussion within the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) (and it has also already been the topic of countless studies in this area) since it very clearly brings up the interconnectedness between science and technology on the one hand, and society on the other. In the current research mainly the role of society on the development of a large windmill park is examined, but it will also address at some points how the technological developments influence society.

When purely looking at the case study of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder it becomes clear how in our '*technological culture*' (Godin and Gingras 2000, Bijker 2003) both society and technology are ultimately interconnected. There is the technological development which has made the construction of large windmills for energy production possible. The latter has become necessary in the first place because of polluting older systems, but this new technological solution has an important impact on society. The windmills will change the landscape and affect the people living in the area, not least because of noise nuisance (Pedersen 2007).

Because of this 'threat' some people are against the construction of the large scale windmill park and attempt to impede it. They try (using various techniques) to stop the development of the windmill park, and focus on alternative methods for durable energy production.

Researching this process is relevant from an STS perspective since it will provide insights in the development of this type of renewable energy system. The case of windmill development shows that with regard to renewable energy we can definitely not think in terms of technological determinism; too many cases in which there were plans for the construction of a

windmill (park) show that the development ultimately gets stopped (Bosch, Dooper and Van Rijn 2008), illustrating that the technology can not simply impose itself on society and thus is interconnected with society<sup>9</sup>. Technological artefacts have an influence on our society, and vice versa does society influence the development of these artefacts ('they are both socially constructed and society shaping' (Hughes 1987, p. 51)). STS can make this point clear, and can, from thereon help to find progressive solutions for sustainable development that fit in our society.

As Bijker (2003) says:

'STS needs to (...) contribute to democratizing this technological culture: to show to a broad array of audiences (...) that science and technology are value laden, that all aspects of modern culture are infused with science and technology, that science and technology do play key roles in keeping society together, and that they are equally central in all events that threaten its stability.' (Bijker 2003, p. 444)

Bijker presents this call for greater responsibilities for STS scholars in the context of the vulnerability of our technological culture (Bijker 2006); the case of renewable energy fits very well in this. There is a need for STS scholars to show that the development of windmills is value laden because it has such a big impact on society.

This paper will make clear how the engagement of society in the development of the plans is vital for a successful implementation of wind energy. And it will show how the unjustified use of the term *public participation* can give a false sense of citizen engagement.

### 1.3. Thesis structure

In this thesis first of all the theoretical backbone of the concept of public engagement will be addressed in chapter 2, in which the distinction between public information, public

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<sup>9</sup> 'There is no [purely] technocratic solution to this problem' (Renn et al. 1995a, p. xiii) (Renn et al. refer here to environmental policies in general).

consultation and public participation will be set apart. A new definition of public engagement will be formulated on the basis of existing theory, and based on the reviewed literature the purpose of public engagement will be examined.

Subsequently this thesis will dive into one case study (the planned windmill park in the Noordoostpolder) to illustrate the meaning of public engagement in a real life situation, and to examine whether and how different types of public engagement can be identified in this specific case. Chapter 3 sketches the situation around the developments of the windmill park and it takes a look at the so-called NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) reactions from some of the opposing groups. In chapter 4 various forms of public engagement that can be identified in the Noordoostpolder are addressed; their validity as forms of engagement is tested, and different theoretical concepts will be brought into the discussion. However, as chapter 4 will make clear the level of public engagement in the Noordoostpolder is rather low; therefore the situation of the windmill park in the Haarlemmermeer is briefly sketched in subchapter 4.5 to illustrate how the public can get engaged in the development of a windmill park. Chapter 5 will then conclude the public involvement surrounding the Noordoostpolder and will search for some possible explanations for the lack of this engagement; followed by an overall conclusion of this thesis in chapter 6. Recommendations towards the initiators of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder, and of any future RES in general, will be formulated; whereas the thesis will end with a list of interesting research directions that have come to the surface during the work on this dissertation.

#### 1.4. Methodology

It was originally intended to make this thesis a mainly theoretical review with some small examples of real life situations. However, as the process and the theoretical work proceeded it

became clear that it would be desirable to focus on one specific case study in order to gain enough depth to be able to make any real contributions to the topic. The theoretical analysis of the meaning of the concept of public engagement is still part of this paper, but the practical case of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder has now become the lion's share of this dissertation.

To research the context of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder a number of interviews have been conducted with various parties that are involved in the construction of the windmill park; but also organizations that are less directly related to this specific park have been consulted. In total nine interviews of approximately 45 minutes were conducted with ten different people. Four of the interviewees represented the initiators of the windmill park (Mr. Louter, project manager, Mrs. Wijnia-Lemstra, secretary of the Koepel Windenergie Noordoostpolder, Mr. De Groot, with his company Ventolines actively involved in the development of the plans and Mrs. Appels, of Beaumont Communicatie & Management BV which was hired to do the communication around the park); furthermore a civil servant of the municipalities Noordoostpolder (Mr. Arnoldy) and Urk (Mr. Bogerd), and a member of the opposition movement Urk Briest (Mrs. De Vries) were interviewed, supplemented with interviews with Mr. Jansen (Senternovem<sup>10</sup>) and Mr. Schilp and Mrs. Stapels (ministry of VROM) who are less directly involved in the park in the Noordoostpolder.

All the interviews were conducted mainly according to Yin's second type of case study interview: the *focused interview* (Yin 2009, p. 107). This means that a list of questions concerning the influence of the people living in the area was used during the interviews (appendix A), but the interviews were open-ended and performed in a conversational manner. By having an open discussion more diverse information could be derived (in line with Yin's *in-*

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.senternovem.nl/english/>

*depth interview*), while the list of questions served as a checklist to make sure all important aspects of the case study would be addressed at some point during the conversation. This also means that information gained from the interviews can not be used quantitatively, but rather qualitatively. The advantage of this is that one can get an in-depth and better understanding of the complexity of the case, as well as, its context (Punch 2005).

Although the construction of the park has not been started yet, a visit to the location and direct surroundings has also been made in order to get a better personal insight of the case. The list of interviewees can be found in appendix B and for those in possession of an original hardcopy, the audio recordings are added on CD in appendix G. The information from the interviews was complemented by some e-mail exchanges (appendix D).



## 2. Public engagement – Framework analysis

Roughly since the 1960s the involvement of the public (popularized under the term *participation*) in both 'regular' policy-making (see for example Pateman 1970) and in science and technology policy-making (see Lengwiler 2008) has been increasing. This increase of public engagement can be looked upon from different sides. First there is a call for greater democratization of public decisions (see Arnstein 1969, Pateman 1970, Creighton 2005 or Barber 2003 for a discussion on this), secondly scientific and technological advancements have caused a change in society which requires more public engagement (described by Beck (1997) as the *Risk-society*) and third, 'mass higher education' has led to a greater informed citizenry, described by Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons (2001) as one of the characteristics of *Mode-2 society*<sup>11</sup>.

This chapter will discuss what the concept of public engagement means from a theoretical perspective. It will become clear from the existing definitions that public engagement is a very broad and rather blurred concept. In the second part of this paper the case of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder will be examined; in that discussion some additional theory will be incorporated when necessary.

### 2.1. Defining public engagement

A quick search on the internet shows that the term 'public engagement' is most often used within education. The exact definitions of the term in this context may vary, but the overall

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<sup>11</sup> Whether the greater availability of information through new media (internet, television) has caused a better informed citizenry is still disputed and can be questioned, I will resist the temptation to dig into this discussion here, but for those interested see Webster (2006, chapter 7).

intention is to get non-specialists (parents, community members, etc.) involved in teaching and research in order to improve and reform schools or academic institutions<sup>12</sup>.

Within the context of this paper (involving the 'general public' in science and technology policy) the concept of public engagement is less common; *participation* is a more often used term. Nevertheless, I will follow the terminology of Rowe and Frewer (2005) and use *engagement* as the overall term, and define participation as only one part of this (as does the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development<sup>13</sup> (OECD) (2001a, 2001b, 2003)); the arguments for this choice will become evident in the discussion below. But in order to answer what in fact constitutes public engagement, theories and definitions will first have to be derived from authors that use the concept of public participation.

To define what public engagement means in one clear-cut explanation is not an easy task, if not an impossible one. If we look at the different definitions of public participation it soon becomes clear that the concept is ambiguous, wide and sometimes even rather hollow. Besides that public participation is a concept which has been discussed lengthily in the academic field; despite this, an attempt is made to summarize and review some of the more important and influencing works to create a general understanding of the concept.

Already in 1970 Pateman recognized that: 'The widespread use of the term [participation] in the mass media has tended to mean that any precise meaningful content has almost disappeared; "participation" is used to refer to a wide variety of different situations by

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<sup>12</sup> See for example: <http://www.engagement.umn.edu/cope/about/index.html>, <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/DictionaryResults.aspx?refid=561538065> and <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/WSLF/wslfapubs.htm> (Retrieved April 2009)

<sup>13</sup> The OECD does not use the term engagement as an overall umbrella though.



different people.' (Pateman 1970, p. 1). Pateman does (perhaps exactly for this reason) also no attempt to define participation in her own words, but rather seems to include all kinds of public involvement in decision making (at different levels).

One of the oldest definitions of modern participation stems from Arnstein's influential 'A ladder of citizen participation' (1969) and states that participation is: 'the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future' (Arnstein 1969, p. 216). It must be noted here that Arnstein wrote these words a long time ago, and that the term of 'excluded citizens' may not be appropriate anymore; however, the notion of giving power to the people is still part of today's theories about participation. Bishop and Davis's (2002) definition of participation can be seen as a more nuanced version of Arnstein's words, perhaps better suitable to this time. For them participation is 'the expectation that citizens have a voice in policy choices. (...) the idea of participation rests always on a sharing of power between the governed and the government' (Bishop and Davis 2002, p. 14).

In the introduction of a special issue of *Science and Public Policy* on public participation, Joss (1999) tries to provide an overview of the wide-ranging meaning of public participation:

'What is meant here by 'public participation' is, in a broad sense, the engagement in the processes of policy- and decision- making not just of the usual professional experts, policy analysts and decision-makers, but also a wider spectrum of social actors. The latter may include representatives of non-governmental organizations, local communities, interest groups and grassroots movements, as well as individual lay people in their capacity as citizens and/or consumers.' (Joss 1999, p. 290).

Joss includes the element of the sharing of power, but also shows us what the term citizens actually means, namely a broad range of people, either individual, or organized in groups/movements. Rowe and Frewer (2004) on the other hand show that not only the word

'citizens' covers a broad spectrum; also 'policy-making' is a wide-ranging term. In their general definition of public participation they call it: 'the practice of consulting and involving members of the public in the agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy-forming activities of organizations/institutions responsible for policy development' (Rowe and Frewer 2004, p. 512). Therewith showing that there are different steps in policy development; in all of which the public can/should be engaged.

Renn, Webler and Wiedemann (1995b), who focus only on 'intentionally designed structures for participation', define public participation as: 'forums for exchange that are organized for the purpose of facilitating communication between government, citizens, stakeholders and interest groups, and businesses regarding a specific decision or problem' (Renn et al. 1995b, p. 2). Herewith they deliberately exclude forms of protest, something that within the scope of their book might be a valid decision, but many other scholars would consider protest also as a form of public engagement (e.g. De Vries 1997 and Jamison 2001, 2003). Since protests can lead to policy changes it must be admitted that it is a method for the public to get engaged in the policy-making process, even though it might be a rather weak form; not always being successful.

To summarize the meaning of public engagement<sup>14</sup>, based on the above discussion, a working definition can be formulated:

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<sup>14</sup> Although the definitions quoted in this article are already very open, many authors describing the process of public engagement (or participation) do not even specify the concept at all, and thereby leaving it in an even wider, more blurred state, open for different interpretations. A good example of this is Jamison and Østby's (Eds.) 'Public Participation and Sustainable Development: Comparing European Experiences' (1997), in which public participation seems to have a very broad overall coverage, open for own interpretation by its contributors.

The process of engaging members of the public (citizens), individually or in (organized) groups, either intended or unintended, in (any phase of) policy-making, and therewith sharing in the power.

Despite the fact that it has been possible to formulate one definition, it is still very obscure; as Jamison would call it: 'A catch-all phrase that is used to describe a variety of ways in which various types of people are involved in these processes' (Jamison 2001, p. 19).

It must be recognized that the definition as stated above applies to the broad area of public engagement and is therefore also very wide in its implications. Later in this thesis, when the distinction between public engagement and public participation will be made explicit, it will become possible to get to a more detailed level.

## 2.2. Levels of public engagement

However, now that it has become clear (enough) what the concept of public engagement is about, it has also become evident that the gamut of the term is incredibly wide and that it would be preferable to introduce a certain scale to distinct various levels of engagement. This scaling can be done in various ways; it could be based on the actual power that is given to the citizens, but also on the type of engagement (it must be noted that these two are inherently linked, but their implementations differ).

### 2.2.1. Scaling on the basis of power distribution

While the majority of authors seem to prefer to scale public engagement on the basis of types of engagement, Arnstein (1969) has concerned herself mainly with the distribution of power.

Arnstein recognized that, although the term participation may sound good, 'participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless. It allows the power-holders to claim that all sides were considered, but makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit' (1969, p. 216). Herewith she emphasizes that public engagement does not always mean a more equal share of power (even though that is part of her definition of public participation, see above).

To illustrate this point Arnstein introduces a *Ladder of Citizen Participation* where each rung higher on the ladder represents a greater share of power for the citizens<sup>15</sup>. While on the lowest level (*Manipulation*) the citizen has no power at all, and 'participation' is only used to 'enable powerholders to "educate" or "cure" the participants', at the highest level (*Citizen Control*) 'citizens obtain the majority of decision-making seats, or full managerial power' (Arnstein 1969, p. 217).

Edelman (1977), who is very critical towards public engagement, sees many examples of public participation in real life that are limited to Arnstein's lowest levels of participation<sup>16</sup> (although he does not refer to Arnstein's ladder in his article). And although his article is merely a critical reflection of the current situation (now over 30 years ago), he clearly wants to make a similar statement as Arnstein saying that participation has various levels, and that it therefore does not necessarily lead to more power for the public.

While for Arnstein it is very important to reach a high level of public engagement and to '*redistribute*' the power to the people, others claim that the type of (policy) problem at hand should determine the level of public involvement (see for example Thomas 1990). This can

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<sup>15</sup> It must be noted that Arnstein focuses on '*have-not citizens*', but her general ideas can easily be extracted to a more general public.

<sup>16</sup> 'Participation in group meetings has often been obligatory: in China, in Russia, and in Nazi Germany, just as it usually is in mental hospitals, in prisons, and in high schools that emphasize student self-government; for it helps evoke popular acquiescence in rules that would be resisted if authorities imposed them by fiat.' (Edelman 1977, p. 160)

also be seen in the work of Shand and Arnberg, described by Bishop and Davis (2002). For Shand and Arnberg participation is a tool which can be used by public officials, and, based on the situation and objective, policy-makers can choose whether they want a high or low level of public engagement<sup>17</sup> (ranging from minimal involvement in information provision to maximum community control) (Bishop and Davis 2002). It may be obvious though that, while there might be some occasions in which there is maximum community control, policy-makers determine when to make use of this, which in the end gives them the ultimate power.

### 2.2.2. Scaling on the basis of types of engagement

A second way to scale public engagement is by looking at various types of engagement. Although this way of subdividing also leads to a specific distribution of power, it goes beyond this initial separation.

The term public engagement has been introduced by Rowe and Frewer (2005) as the overall concept of which participation is only one distinctive part. For them the *'flow of information'* is what has to be looked at, and on the basis of this they set apart *'public communication'*, *'public consultation'* and *'public participation'* (Rowe and Frewer 2005, p. 254). It must be mentioned that the OECD had already made a similar distinction, but the OECD uses public *'information'* instead of *'communication'*, the meanings of the terms are slightly different, and the OECD had not introduced one general term to capture the three types of *engagement* (OECD 2001a, 2001b, 2003).

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<sup>17</sup> It is the intention of the Dutch government to introduce a more or less similar system in which all public servants must ask themselves the question: Do I need to apply a form of public engagement in this case? (Stapels, interview).

The distinction, as already mentioned, between public information (or communication as Rowe and Frewer call it)<sup>18</sup>, consultation and participation is based on the flow of information.

In the case of public information there is only information flowing from decision-makers (*sponsors* according to Rowe and Frewer 2005) to the public (or representatives thereof). On the meaning of the term consultation Rowe and Frewer and the OECD do not exactly agree. While Rowe and Frewer see this as information only flowing from the public to the decision-makers, the OECD identifies information flows in both directions. However, in this case there is no real interaction between government and public; the government mainly tries to extract citizens' views, which therefore is very much comparable with the one-way stream of Rowe and Frewer. The third type of public engagement is public participation, in this case there is an interactive flow of information in both directions and 'citizens actively engage in the policy-making process' (OECD 2001b).

The definition of public participation according to Creighton (2005) has deliberately been left out in the initial discussion about the definition of public engagement. Now that it has become clear that public engagement is not really the same as public participation Creighton can be introduced and a separate definition can be made to find out what public *participation* really means. According to Creighton public participation encompasses:

'Not just providing information to the public. [But] there is interaction between the organization making the decision and the people who want to participate. The public have some level of impact or influence on the decision being made,' and 'there is an organized

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<sup>18</sup> In the definition of communication ('a process by which information is exchanged in between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour' Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 23 June 2009) there is no inherent meaning of the direction of the flow of information, therefore public *information* is preferable since this implies information towards the public. It goes without saying that information is also bilateral in this context.

process for involving the public; it is not something that happens accidentally or coincidentally.' (Creighton 2005, p. 7).

One of the important distinctions between public participation and other types of engagement that can be derived from this (apart from the obvious interaction) is that participation is (usually) done deliberately and in an organized manner. Although this might also be the case for public information and public consultation these *could* also happen in a less organized setting; one can for example think about protests that lead to policy changes.

In a way the types of engagement mentioned above represent some similarities to the ladder of participation developed by Arnstein (1969). The main difference here is that not everything can be called participation - a view with which Arnstein could probably relate very well; and although the different types of engagement have, to some degree, an inherent power distribution it is not as straightforward and linear as Arnstein's ladder.

However, while Arnstein calls for greater participation in general, it must also be recognized that some forms of lower involvement (so in which information flows in only one direction) can sometimes be preferable as well (Rowe and Frewer 2000). Thomas (1990, 1995) recognizes this too, but he also emphasizes the importance of establishing a productive relationship between citizens and public managers (as he calls politicians/decision-makers) for an increase of public participation.

Thus, when looking at different levels of public engagement it is important to be careful with the nomenclature; *participation* may be misleading, and terms like public information or public consultation can be more appropriate. Therefore the choice was made to adapt the

term *engagement* as the overall umbrella of which the others are typical parts, all with their own value.

### 2.2.3. Bishop and Davis's 'characteristics of contemporary participation'

Bishop and Davis (2002) (who clearly build upon the work of Thomas and Shand and Arnberg) do not provide a continuum of levels of engagement nor do they make a separation based on information flows. On the basis of a number of practical OECD studies<sup>19</sup> they have developed a 'descriptive rather than normative' schematic (Bishop and Davis 2002, p. 21). They list their 'five-way characteristic of contemporary participation' as the following types of engagement: *consultation* (where the public gets a chance to comment on policy proposals, hence similar to the public consultation address above), *partnership* (where the public can give policy recommendations in forms of co-production, a kind of public participation), *standing* (where the public can enter the policy process through court), *consumer choice* (where the public can use market-like mechanisms to shape a policy) and *control* (where the public has direct control, for example via referenda) (Bishop and Davis 2002, p. 21-22). What can be seen as remarkable here is that the step of informing citizens is not present, while this is a part of the other scales. Since Bishop and Davis write about *participation* and not *engagement*, it can easily be defended that public information does not belong in their publication, but on the other hand, some of their *characteristics* (consultation, standing and consumer choice) do also not fit within Creighton's definition of participation, but have to be seen as forms of public consultation since there is no real interaction nor a deliberative planning element.

The two types of public engagement mentioned by Bishop and Davis that are also extraordinary are *standing* and *consumer choice*. Those are types of engagement that are

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<sup>19</sup> The OECD's *Country Studies on Public Consultation* that were prepared for the *Meeting on Public Consultation in Regulatory Development* in Paris, August 1994.



usually not considered by other authors. By *standing* Bishop and Davis refer to the possibility for citizens to use the courts to enter policy-making discussions; this is an opportunity for citizens to block certain plans, or at least test their legality. In the case study of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder this opportunity for public engagement also plays a role and will thus be discussed in greater detail below.

Bishop and Davis see in consumer choice a possibility for citizens to show their opinion thanks to the recent reform in the public sector. Since many public services have been privatized people have a voice as consumers by means of switching providers. Bishop and Davis see this as a positive development because it is a way for people to express discontent; however since they draw mainly on reports from only one organization (the OECD) one has to take into account the possibility of this information being biased. After all, not everyone favours privatization of the public sector (see for example Lane 1997). And besides, when a former public service gets privatized, consumers may have a choice, but this will only influence market mechanisms since the authorities are no longer responsible, therewith giving the people more choice and freedom, but not really an opportunity to express any kind of disagreement with policy-makers.

Consumer choice does offer some possibilities to express discontentment though, by boycotting products from a certain country in case of an international dispute for example.

These two types of engagement (standing and consumer choice) can be seen as remarkable, and at the edge of public engagement (actually already outside the definition!), since they do not directly involve the public in policy-making, but allow citizens via an indirect routes to articulate disapproval; therewith they can indirectly influence policy-making. These forms of engagement might be powerful tools to express (mainly dis-)agreement though, and especially *standing* plays an important role in the case of the Noordoostpolder.

### 2.3. Purposes of public engagement

It has already been brought up before that certain situations can ask for a specific type of public engagement, but this also makes it necessary, before going to the case of the windmill park, to take a closer look at the theoretical purposes of public engagement. Because as Arnstein has put it: 'The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you' (Arnstein 1969, p. 216), but as Edelman (who is very critical about participation, since he sees it as taking place mainly in the lowest rungs of Arnstein's ladder) mentions: 'liberals, radicals, and authoritarians all favor participation, a tribute to the term's symbolic potency and semantic hollowness' (Edelman 1977, p. 159).

For most of the authors that have been addressed in this review so far, the main purpose of an increase of public engagement can be found in democratic ideals (e.g. Pateman 1970, Arnstein 1969) (as is also the background of the legal rights to participate). These authors have a clear focus on an increase of self-government by citizens and want to apply methods of public engagement to reach this goal. However, it does not necessarily have to be democratic ideals that lay at the heart of public engagement.

The main reason of the OECD to increase public engagement is not directly a democratic ideal, but in their 'Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-making' they state that they provide the handbook 'to give government officials practical assistance in strengthening the relations between government and citizens' (OECD 2001a, p. 8). The OECD recognizes that 'Citizens and organizations of civil society have become increasingly vocal in recent years, bringing forward issues and demands and trying to influence policy-makers' (OECD 2001a, p. 8). Although this can be seen in line with democratic ideals, the purpose here

is not to give citizens a greater say only, but mainly to help governments deal with situations in which the public speaks up.

The public can also be engaged in decision-making to ensure that the choices made are better (Creighton 2005), and that the choices are more commonly accepted, thus have a broader social support. Proper public engagement can prevent potential conflict since different views and interests can be incorporated in the process and can be resolved timely (Kørnøv 2007); therewith it can also improve planning (Kørnøv 2007, Creighton 2005) and reduce NIMBY-reactions (Dear 1992). Thomas (1995) found out that the reason to engage people in decision-making can often be found in this area: 'More often than not, the impetus for public involvement comes from a need to obtain acceptance as a prerequisite to successful implementation' (Thomas 1995, p. 113).

The element of acceptance and coming into existence of a broad social support also plays a role in the developments surrounding the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder and will as a consequence be touched upon in greater detail below.

But besides these reasons to enhance public engagement seen from a more political angle, there can be another reason for public engagement, hardly discussed by most authors that go into the theory of public engagement/participation. This second purpose of public involvement can more often be identified in discussions surround the (limits of the) role of experts (e.g. Kleinman 2005). In various situations there may exist a certain kind of knowledge within lay people that experts are unaware of, in these cases it is also very recommendable to involve the public in decision-making. One of the best known examples to illustrate this is probably Wynne's 'Sheepfarming after Chernobyl' (1989) in which the author shows that

sometimes 'lay' people have got a certain expertise (often based on experience) that the experts do not know about and do not consider relevant in their decision-making.

A regularly heard criticism with regards to engaging lay people in science and technology (policy) debates is that lay people do not possess the knowledge needed to contribute to the process (Levitt and Gross 1994) (various studies have also suggested this, however, the quality of these studies can be questioned, see Wynne 1995). And as Wynne has shown in his earlier article (1989), sometimes there is more specific expertise among lay people than among experts. But also in cases in which lay people do not have tacit knowledge based on experience, they can be very well able to obtain the knowledge required to engage themselves in the debate (Kleinman 2005), especially when it is relevant to everyday life (Hagendijk and Irwin 2006).

A popular example to illustrate how lay people can acquire specific knowledge once they have become interested in a certain topic is given by Epstein's studies on AIDS activism (see for example Kleinman 2005, Sismondo 2004 and Bucchi 2004). Epstein (1995, 1996) shows in his work how lay people can get involved in science, and how they can influence the direction of it, once they have gained enough knowledge about the subject<sup>20</sup>.

Next to these mainly positive arguments for public engagement it must also be noted that in practice some downsides can be identified. An important issue indicated by wind energy developers in the Netherlands is that the process becomes rather complex if all the

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<sup>20</sup> It must be noted that Epstein's work refers to a concrete example from within science, but the basic idea of public engagement and public learning can be extractable to policy making as well, and can also to some extent be observed in the case study. The municipality of Urk has almost become an expert in RES and Mrs. De Vries showed a large knowledge and understanding of windmills.

stakeholders have to get involved (Van Zuylen, Heijnes and Coelingh 1999), but Van Zuylen et al. also mention a decrease in time required for the planning process as a positive side of engagement.

#### 2.4. Methods of engagement<sup>21</sup>

A very last comment which has to be made before it is possible to really dive into the case study has to do with the methods of public engagement. Over the years, many different methods to involve the public in science and technology policy-making have been developed; they are even so plenty that it is impossible to list them here. Rowe and Frewer (2005) have done an attempt to document them, but even while their list contains over 100 methods, derived from 30 different sources, they must admit that 'there are undoubtedly more' (Rowe and Frewer 2005, p. 256). For this reason it is not possible to get into any detailed level here, but to list just a number of examples, showing the wide range of possibilities, in type of engagement as well as in level of engagement: Consensus Conference (e.g. Joss and Durant 1995) and Focus Groups (e.g. Kasemir, Jäger, Jaeger and Gardner 2003b, Macnaghten and Jacobs 1997), Community-based Research (e.g. Chopyak and Levesque 2002), Referenda (Roggenkamp 2002, Rowe and Frewer 2000) and Public Opinion Surveys (Rowe and Frewer 2000), Social Movements and Activism (Jamison 2001), (non-) Interactive Cable TV (Rowe and Frewer 2005) and many others.

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<sup>21</sup> Rowe and Frewer (2005) call it participation *mechanisms*; Mrs. Stapels from VROM used the term *instruments*.



### 3. Windmill park Noordoostpolder<sup>22</sup>

Now that the (main) theory about public engagement has been discussed, and the difference between the types of public engagement have been made clear it is time to dive into the empirical part of this thesis.

As mentioned before, in the course of this research, the decision was made to take only one example of renewable energy production in the Netherlands into account; this case is the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder. The main reasons were that there is a lot of emphasis on the development of wind energy in the Netherlands in general, and that the Noordoostpolder is a (especially for Dutch standards) rather large project (approximately 100 windmills with a combined capacity of 450 MW). This also means that it is important for the Dutch government that the project will be realized in order to reach their sustainability goals.

From a public engagement point of view this case is interesting because one can regularly find signs of protests from locals in the newspapers, raising questions about public involvement. Finally this case was especially intriguing due to the possibilities for financial participation that are offered to the inhabitants of the Noordoostpolder (and possibly also of the neighbouring municipalities).

Before getting into detail about public engagement and the development of the windmill park the park as such will be briefly introduced.

The Noordoostpolder is a municipality which belongs to the province Flevoland and is adjacent to the IJsselmeer (see the map in appendix E); because of the flat land and the lake it is, like

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<sup>22</sup> For more information about project see also: <http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/> and <http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/>

the rest of Flevoland very suited for wind energy production (Senternovem 2005) (the '*windmap*' of Senternovem shows a thin line with very good wind locations in the Noordoostpolder, but as Mr. Jansen also mentioned, there are better suited locations in the Netherlands, for example in Friesland). In the other rural municipalities of Flevoland one can see a lot of windmills spread out through the landscape, and often located solely on farmyards (see the pictures in appendix F). Although farmers in the Noordoostpolder were allowed to build such solitaire turbines on their land at first as well, the town council decided in 1998 that they no longer wanted this out of fear for a too messy landscape (Arnoldy, interview) (and the inefficiency of the system (Lakeman and Zijlstra 2004<sup>23</sup>)); a problem the rest of the province has run into recently and for which they created a new wind energy policy in 2006 (Provincie Flevoland 2007).

Around the same period the town council decided to stop giving permission for solitaire windmills also the first plans of local farmers emerged to jointly construct a windmill park (Wijnia-Lemstra, interview). After conducting a number of studies to find the most appropriate location, the municipality finally pointed out the sites on the dikes in the west of the Noordoostpolder as the most suited to build a large and concentrated windmill park (Lakeman and Zijlstra 2004).

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<sup>23</sup> Lakeman and Zijlstra are the authors of the start annotation for the EIAs, they wrote five different annotations (one for each EIA, so for each project within the overall plan), but within this thesis only the common part which is the same for each annotation was used.





Figure 1: Location of the windmill park (Source: <http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/project.php?cid=204> (Retrieved 23 June 2009))

In total the five projects (six lines) will have a capacity of 450 MW spread out over 80-100 windmills; the exact type of windmills is at this moment not clear yet, but it will thus be very large mills of approximately 5 MW each. The height of the axes of the mills will be between 70 and 135 meters which means that the highest point of the wings will be 198 meter. The windmills will be placed at a distance of 750 meters from the nearest houses, and 1.6 km from Urk (Windpark Noordoostpolder 2009). Urk is a village of about 18.000 inhabitants that will end up in the middle of the windmill park. Before the Noordoostpolder was drained in 1942 Urk was an island; nowadays it is connected to the main land via the Noordoostpolder. Urk is a historical village and still an independent municipality, on all sides surrounded by the Noordoostpolder.

To get a better understanding of the construction of all parties that are involved in the development of the project it is better to step aside from a historical description of the progressions surrounding this, and to look at the current situation from a more hierarchical point of view.

The organization that captures all the directly involved parties is called the Stuurgroep Windpark Noordoostpolder (a steering/leading group, hereafter called the Stuurgroep). This Stuurgroep is lead by Dirk Louter, who, as an independent manager, has been hired as the project director (only since the end of 2008 (Louter, interview)). Furthermore this group consists of the Koepel Windenergie Noordoostpolder, the municipality Noordoostpolder, the province Flevoland and three ministries: VROM (Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment), EZ (Economic Affairs) and LNV (Agriculture, Nature and Food) (<http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/> (cited 22 June 2009)). The role of the local, regional and national governments in this, for now, is less interesting (although Mr. Bogerd from municipality Urk justifiably questions the presence of the licensing organization in the same group that also has to request authorization to build). The inner construction of the Koepel Windenergie Noordoostpolder (hereafter called the Koepel, meaning the umbrella) requires some more explanation.

The Koepel is an association of the five large-scale initiators of the windmill park (these were brought together originally in a Platform (started November 16<sup>th</sup> 2000; the Koepel was installed officially on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2003), initiated by the local government in 1999 (Lakeman and Zijlstra 2004)). The board of the Koepel consists of representatives of the project partners and an independent chairman, secretary and project coordinator. The project partners consist of the initiators, who started the project, and now develop it. The project partners are mainly local parties. These local parties then again represent groups of farmers that take part in the projects (<http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/project.php?cid=56> (22 June 2009)). Each line of windmills belongs to a different project partner<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> See also <http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/project.php?cid=204> (22 June 2009).

The purpose of the Koepel is to look after the common interests of the initiators in: (a) the making of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), (b) the communication with the authorities, and (c) the publicity (<http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/project.php?cid=56> (22 June 2009)). Although the Koepel has originally been initiated by the local government to work out the municipalities policy in joint effort there will still be five different EIAs; these will be combined in one document containing an integral part looking at the cumulative effects of the park, and a part containing five different chapters for each project respectively (Lakeman and Zijlstra 2004).

The plans for the construction of a concentrated windmill park in the Noordoostpolder date from the 1990s; after a long startup-phase it is now the intention to get the project out of its initiation-phase, and into a preparation phase so that the realization of the project can start by the end of 2010 or 2011<sup>25</sup> (Louter, interview). By 2012/2013 the park should be operating and then it should be possible to harvest wind energy (Windpark Noordoostpolder 2009).

Now that the theoretical backbone of this thesis has been explored in the previous chapter and the empirical study has been introduced it becomes possible to take a look at the practical side of public engagement in this one opportunity for renewable energy production in the Netherlands.

This description will mainly be based on the interviews conducted with ten people of nine different organizations that are involved in the development of the windmill park or that are otherwise engaged, supplemented with information retrieved from e-mail contacts with the interviewees as well as other stakeholders.

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<sup>25</sup> Mr. De Groot indicated that he expects to get the final verdict of the Raad van State (Council of State) in the last quarter of 2010 or in the first quarter of 2011.

### 3.1. Neighbourhood quarrel

The term neighbourhood quarrel in relation to the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder was introduced by project manager Mr. Louter. He referred to discussions he had as project director with people that live in the surroundings of the project and who are against the construction of the park<sup>26</sup>.

After having done all the interviews the impression of a neighbourhood quarrel was indeed very strong, and there actually arose a feeling of calling 'De Rijdende Rechter', a Dutch TV-show in which a judge visits people that have gotten into a neighbourhood quarrel, to solve this dispute.

Although I did not carry out a personal interview with one of these neighbours Mr. Louter referred to, I did have the opportunity to talk to a representative of the neighbouring municipality Urk (Mr. Bogerd) and to a representative of Urk Briest (Mrs. De Vries) who are both strongly against the construction of the park. In contrast, on the other side there were interviews with representatives of the initiators of the project (Louter, Wijnia-Lemstra, De Groot) who, of course, were very much in favour of the park. It soon became clear, and that was something that the representatives of the project seemed to realize more than the protesters, that the interests of both groups lay so far apart that there was absolutely no common ground that could become a basis for a progressive discussion.

The interests of the initiators can be brought back to the construction of a number of windmills so that there is a financial gain for them. For Urk Briest, as well as the municipality Urk, it is completely unacceptable to build windmills on this location; they prefer other sorts of renewable energy. However since the initiators already put a lot of effort, time and money in

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<sup>26</sup> Mr. Louter: 'Sometimes I sat at the table with these people thinking I am now in the middle of an ordinary neighbourhood quarrel.'

the development of windmills they are not interested in developing other sorts of renewable energy and just want to harvest wind. With these contrasting agendas it does not seem possible for the both parties to get any closer to each other. Therefore it will inevitably come down to a judge to decide which of the both parties is to win. In chapter 4.1 about *public hearing and the legal trajectory* this will be discussed in more detail.

That the development of this windmill park has come down to a neighbourhood quarrel can also be seen in the fact that the opposing parties both have made their own images of how the park will come to look like in the end. Both parties simply accuse each other of manipulating the truth and the municipality Noordoostpolder accused Urk of making propaganda. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 an article in Het Nederlands Dagblad illustrated this neighbourhood quarrel nicely by depicting a discussion between a spokesperson of Urk and an alderman of Noordoostpolder<sup>27</sup>. In the chapter on information (chapter 4.2) a more in depth description will be given about how it could have happened that both parties have different versions of the truth.

### 3.1.1. NIMBY

A problem which can often be identified and which is related to the neighbourhood quarrel is the NIMBY-effect. 'Not-In-My-Backyard' statements are a very common reaction when dealing with the construction of a windmill<sup>28</sup> (Bell, Gray and Hagget 2005, Russell 2008). It must be noted though that Bell et al. claim that NIMBY-ism is a too simplistic explanation, and that a social and an individual gap exists. These gaps between the overall support for wind energy

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.nd.nl/artikelen/2009/april/09/windmolens-leiden-tot-propagandaoorlog> (30 June 2009) only available in Dutch.

<sup>28</sup> During the interview with Mrs. Stapels of VROM she showed some maps of the Netherlands on which citizens were asked during a citizen participation project about windmills to indicate possible locations for new windmill parks, some of these also clearly showed a NIMBY-reaction: participants saying just put them there, then they won't bother me.

and the lack of support for actual planning and development can be seen as mere in-depth explanations for NIMBY-symptoms though. Wolsink (2000) also questions the validity of NIMBY-ism as a reason why the construction of windmills has sometimes failed. He emphasizes that there are institutional factors that play a larger role, however since the scope of this paper is not to look at why projects have failed, but to look at the involvement of the public their opposition can be called NIMBY-ism here.

Various researches have shown that the general support for wind energy is very high in the Netherlands (The SmartAgent Company 2008), and according to the research executed by Milieu Centraal<sup>29</sup> (Mobach 2009) a majority of the respondents also thought wind energy in the own living area is important. The group of people that is really against the development of a windmill park is usually a minority, but this minority can be heard and seen much more and better than the majority that is in favour (The SmartAgent Company 2009). This is a problem which can also be recognized in the Noordoostpolder, although of course the opponents of the park do not agree that they are a minority (and the municipality Urk should probably also not be seen as one).

There can be various ways to overcome this problem though (Dear 1992). To surmount NIMBY-reactions Dear points out that community relations should be part of every plan. There are two approaches planners can opt for: collaboration or autonomy. In the case of autonomy priority is given to the rights of the initiators so that the construction can just go on as planned no matter whether there are protests; that is often also legally possible, but this does not lead to consensus and acceptance (Dear 1992) (the process in the Noordoostpolder shows very

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<sup>29</sup> Milieu Centraal is an independent national organization to provide information about environmental matters to the Dutch people. ([www.milieucentraal.nl](http://www.milieucentraal.nl); 6 June 2009).

much resemblance with this, even though the objective is to establish a broader social support).

'The collaborative approach assumes direct contact between the service operator and the host community or its representatives. Implicitly or explicitly, collaboration grants relative priority to the community's right to be informed of and participate in decisions affecting their neighborhood. (...) In essence, collaboration involves establishing a social contract between the provider and host community. The operators offer a useful service, openly and honestly, and, in return, anticipate community support.' (Dear 1992).

Dear formulates three basic approaches within the collaborative approach: *Community-based*, *government-based*, and *court-based strategies*. With public engagement as the backbone of this paper it is mainly interesting to look at Dear's *Community-based Strategies*. The first two of these community-based strategies (*Community Education* and *Community Outreach*) can, to some extent, be witnessed in the Noordoostpolder, and will be taken as one in this thesis under the chapter Information (4.2). The other two of Dear's community-based strategies (*Community Advisory Boards* and *Concessions and Incentives to the Community*), in which there is real participation between the initiators and the public, are missing in the development of the windmill park. An example of how this can be applied can be found in the windmill project in the Haarlemmermeer. At the end of the chapter on the Participation Discrepancy a short description of this project will be given to illustrate how true public participation can be and is being applied in the Netherlands (chapter 4.5).

A third methodology which is expected to help to overcome the NIMBY problems, which is not considered by Dear, is financial participation<sup>30</sup>. Financial participation also plays a role in the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder and will thus get more attention later.

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<sup>30</sup> It is commonly accepted that financial participation will help to create more social support, and examples from for example Danish cases suggest it does, but the scientific evidence for this is small. A study by the University of Groningen and Gothenburg University shows that economic benefits decrease the perceived sound annoyance of a windmill, but this does not give convincing evidence that financial participation leads to more social support. (<http://www.rug.nl/wewi/dewetenschapswinkels/natuurkunde/onderzoek/windfarmperceptionproject/index> 1 July 2009).





## 4. The participation discrepancy

In this section the types of public engagement that can be identified in the development of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder will be discussed. It is important throughout this section and the following sub-chapters to keep the distinction between different types of engagement made earlier in mind. It will be shown that many things that are called participation, also by those involved in the Noordoostpolder, are not really forms of participation, they might hardly be engagement. Despite that this chapter is titled participation; the reason for this being that many use this term and it is the intention of this section to illustrate how this can go wrong, and how it can give a false impression of public engagement.

Throughout the case study four kinds of public engagement came to the fore, but as the discussion below will illustrate the levels of this engagement are sometimes questionable. The four kinds of engagement that come to the surface in the Noordoostpolder are: (a) Public hearing and the legal trajectory, (b) public information, (c) financial participation, and (d) local farmers initiated the project (by some the argument was used that the public was involved in the project since it were local farmers that started, and still develop, the plans).

### 4.1. Public hearing and the legal trajectory

According to the majority of the interviews that were conducted the only real chance the opponents still have to stop the construction of the windmill park runs via the legal trajectory. While the opponents still try everything possible to stop the developments (this focuses for a large part on lobbying in the Tweede Kamer (Dutch Lower House)) they are also getting ready

to go to court as soon as the EIA becomes available (De Vries, Bogerd, interviews); a move which is also already anticipated by the initiators (Louter, Wijnia-Lemstra, interviews).

Before getting into the case of the Noordoostpolder again it is necessary to explain the background of the Dutch legal system.

In 1998 the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (better known as the Aarhus Convention) was adopted<sup>31</sup> (UNECE 1998). In the Netherlands though, already in 1983 a constitutional reform integrated a chapter on fundamental rights of individuals concerning the three pillars of the Aarhus Convention (Roggenkamp 2002). In the Constitution it is stated that everybody has the right to go to court and to be heard, thus the Convention's access to justice is a constitutional right<sup>32</sup>, as it is also a right to have access to information<sup>33</sup> (Roggenkamp 2002). Public participation is a more complicated matter, Roggenkamp states:

'As far as public participation in decision-making is concerned, the Constitution is less clear-cut and a distinction needs to be made between law-making and other types of decision-making. The principle of parliamentary representation is fundamental for the legislative process. Through the right of election and the existence of political parties, citizens can influence law-making on all three levels. Direct public participation in the legislative process and other decision-making procedures is provided for by some other petitions, the right to publish thoughts and opinions through the press, and the right of association, assembly and demonstration. These rights are all legal instruments the public can apply in order directly to influence decision-making.' (Roggenkamp 2002, p. 411).

It may be obvious that public participation as stated in the Dutch Constitution is very limited; these are all very indirect routes which can be better seen as public consultation than

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/> (24 June 2009)

<sup>32</sup> Dutch Constitution, Art. 17, 18 ([http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001840/geldigheidsdatum\\_06-07-2009](http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0001840/geldigheidsdatum_06-07-2009) 6 July 2009)

<sup>33</sup> Dutch Constitution, Art. 110

participation<sup>34</sup>. The public can express its thoughts and therewith engage, but there is in no means any kind of true participation protected by law.

The right to go to court is seen by many as the opportunity for the public to express its thoughts about a certain project, and to actually get heard because here the influence can be bigger than only expressing thoughts and hoping for others to pick up on them. In the case of the windmill park, as said before, going to court is seen as the ultimate possibility for the opponents to influence the developments of the park.

It has become rather complicated to track back which legal situation applied at which moment since the processes surrounding the development of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder have been going on for almost two decades and the law on spatial planning has been changed during that period. However, it can be said that before reaching the point of going to court there has been a moment where some of the opposing groups had an opportunity to speak up, not the citizens, but the municipalities. For the citizens of the Noordoostpolder who are against the construction of the windmills this does not apply since their representatives in the council voted at the time unanimously in favour of the concentrated windmill park (Arnoldy, interview), illustrating that electing representatives is a weak form of public engagement with limited possibilities for the citizens. The municipality Urk had an opportunity to speak up at the moment the '*omgevingsplan*' (spatial plan) was presented in the 1990s in which they first saw the ideas for windmill lines in the water; Urk did file an objection against these ideas. However, as indicated by Mr. Bogerd, nothing has been done with this and very often such

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<sup>34</sup> In the law-making process the public does not have a direct say at all, and it can be questioned whether electing policy-makers is a form of engagement.

ideas never get realized anyway. Therefore Urk only heard of the plans again about a year ago (Bogerd, interview).

Despite this earlier objection of Urk the plans to construct a windmill park have gotten into an advanced state, and there will now come a point of public hearing. Mrs. Wijnia-Lemstra:

'In September [2009] the permits will be requested, and those are deposited for inspection, and the public can comment on that. In the beginning of next year the 'rijksinpassingsplan'<sup>35</sup>, together with the design decision and permit requests, will also be deposited for inspection, and the public can comment again. Subsequently, in all likelihood, these will be granted and then they [the opponents] can appeal to the 'Raad van State' [Council of state]. (...) So as for public participation<sup>36</sup> some things are still possible. The qualified authorities will have to judge whether the interests are big enough to make changes to the plan.' (Wijnia-Lemstra, interview).

However, as Mrs. Wijnia-Lemstra's quote clearly indicates, the probability that the upcoming round of public hearing will actually make a difference to the plans is small.

The Environmental Impact Assessment will be one of the most important documents with regards to the granting of the permits; therefore it is also the main opportunity for the opponents to report problems surrounding the park. If the court does not agree on the EIA there is a chance for the opponents that the construction of the park will be stopped. However it has been made very hard for the protesting groups to actually use this opportunity of 'public engagement'. The EIA is a very thick, very complex technical document which is not easy for lay people to get through, for that matter the involvement of the municipality Urk, which has more resources, can turn out to be rather important in the end. But it will possibly not only be

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<sup>35</sup> Sort of spatial plan on a national level.

<sup>36</sup> This is another example of the difficulties with the nomenclature, especially in English. In Dutch Mrs. Wijnia-Lemstra used the term '*inspraak*', and although this is far from participation (it is at most public consultation), participation is the best available translation.

the (inhabitants of) neighbouring municipalities that will critically examine the EIA. Nature organizations such as Vogelbescherming Nederland (bird protection) also follow the developments around the windmill park. As Mr. Hoogenstein (e-mail) indicated, they have not been involved in the selection of the location for the park and they believe that windmills should not be placed in Natura 2000-areas, which the IJsselmeer is. But, as Mr. Hoogenstein's colleague Mr. Peeters mentions in a recent news article in De Volkskrant, the direct surroundings of Urk are a less important area for birds within the IJsselmeer<sup>37</sup>. The Vogelbescherming will soon enter in consultation with the Stuurgroep, so the future will tell how this will work out; unfortunately this research came a little early to find out how this dispute will be settled.

Going to court can also be a tactic to delay a certain process, in the case of the Noordoostpolder it has been made impossible to do this though. The project has been placed under the so called '*rijkscoördinatie-regeling*' (*national coordination regulation*) (Koepel Windenergie Noordoostpolder 2009); the goal of this regulation is to speed up the process, allow for faster and more efficient decision-making and to shorten the procedures<sup>38</sup> (Van Duijvenvoorde 2009). This means that it is not possible to start long objection procedures but that any objection will immediately be looked at by the Raad van State (Council of State). With this the opponents are still given an opportunity to express their objections, but it is not possible to start time-consuming procedures to delay the process (Wijnia-Lemstra, interview).

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<sup>37</sup> [http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/article1256575.ece/Vogels\\_en\\_windmolens\\_gaan\\_niet\\_goed\\_samen](http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/article1256575.ece/Vogels_en_windmolens_gaan_niet_goed_samen) 22 July 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Since 1 March 2009 all windmill parks bigger than 100 MW are automatically placed under this regulation due to an adjustment in the *Elektriciteitswet 1998* (electricity-law) (Elektriciteitswet 1998, Art. 9b: [http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0009755/geldigheidsdatum\\_13-07-2009](http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0009755/geldigheidsdatum_13-07-2009) 13 July 2009).

Based on the institutions of the Dutch law it is thus possible for citizens to express their opinions and objections about the construction of the windmill park via the legal trajectory, and it is possible for them to go to court and ask a judge to block the plans. However this is a very complicated process and as Bishop and Davis (2002), who also consider the option to go to court as a form of public engagement recognize: not all citizens have the 'tenacity or financial wherewithal to use the court as a routine form of review of administrative decisions' (Bishop and Davis 2002; p. 24).

It could even be argued that the possibility for citizens to use the court to express themselves is actually something which gets in the way of real public participation, it is very easy for the initiators to say "we design this our way, and if it does not suit you, you have the right to go to court". This is also something which could be observed during the interviews; see for example the quote of Mrs. Wijnia-Lemstra above.

With a concluding remark it can thus be said that the public hearing and the legal trajectory that is available in this project (and in any project of this kind in the Netherlands) does not really contribute to the public engagement. At most it can help to persuade the developers of the park to get in contact with relevant societal organizations that might take the step to the Raad van State; by staying in contact with these organizations, and listening to and cooperating with them the legal trajectory can be smoothed and the process carried on more efficiently (Van Zuylen et al. 1999), and it can help to strengthen the EIA. In case of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder this can for example be seen in the bat research in which the Vereniging voor Zoogdierkunde en Zoogdierbescherming (association for mammal knowledge and mammal protection) has been involved. This will help the initiators to create a

better EIA, and will prevent organizations from going to court against them, but it is also a form of public engagement which will enlarge the social support for the project.

However, there must also be a common ground which allows such participation, as Mr. Louter indicated, if some kind of organization has smaller comments on the plans (for example because a few mills get too close to bird's nests) he tries to find a solution.

'That is a completely different conversation. And in that case I will do my utmost best to incorporate their comments, because then they can also be in favour of the windpark. (...) Urk Briest is one-issue, it may not come near Urk' (Louter, interview).

This does not give any ground for fruitful conversations, and while Mr. Louter wants to avoid getting into a legal fight he knows that in such a case it will become one, and the Stuurgroep will be prepared for it.

#### 4.2. Information

Above it has been briefly touched upon that providing (the proper) information can reduce some of the NIMBY-symptoms (Dear 1992) that often surround the development of windmills, but before going further into detail about this the current state of information distribution in the case of the Noordoostpolder will be examined.

During the interviews it became clear that the information supply in the past has not been very good. The development of the plans for the park has long been a closed process, hidden from the public (Appels, interview), and even when the plans came out this was not directly communicated to the people living in the surrounding municipalities. Mrs. De Vries of Urk Briest:

'Up until today the inhabitants of Urk have not officially been informed [about the plans], not by the municipality Noordoostpolder, nor by the initiators. And the way we found out

is also very funny. In May last year Jan Mulder wrote a column in the Volkskrant<sup>39</sup> that the sight of Urk would soon become unrecognizable because windmills of 190 meters would be placed. (...) Till then we assumed the windmills would be regular ones, up to 50 meters.' (De Vries, interview).

This initial lack of communication has also become evident to the initiators of the project by now (Appels, Louter, interviews). In an attempt to fix the communication problems towards the public, the Stuurgroep has now attracted a communication agency (Beaumont Communicatie & Management BV, on behalf of which Mrs. Appels is connected to the windmill park) to provide better information to the public. Since November 2008, Mrs. Appels is a part of the project organization; in January of this year did she actively start her job<sup>40</sup>. In the beginning her work has still largely been hidden from the public as it turned out to be necessary to create one story first, and inform the local and regional governments (the democratic authorities as she called it) (Appels, interview). After this predominantly internal process it became time to inform the public.

At the moment of writing of this report the information process is still going on, and has actually only recently been started. It is therefore very hard to tell how successful this campaign will turn out to be. It was evident that the campaign had not reached Urk yet (De Vries, Bogerd, interviews), but the information caravan that set off on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June (a week after the interviews) is supposed to change this. The intention of this caravan is to be more open and to provide more and better information to the public (Appels, interviews). In an e-mail of June 25<sup>th</sup> 2009, Mrs. De Vries informed that she did not know much about the information caravan yet. However something that struck the people of Urk was that the campaign was presented on a Sunday (Urk is known for being a very religious society and most

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<sup>39</sup> May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008; see: <http://extra.volkskrant.nl/opinie/artikel/show/id/648/Urk> (24 June 2009)

<sup>40</sup> From November till January Mrs. Appels worked on the development of a communication strategy which she started to execute in January 2009.



inhabitants of Urk go to church on Sunday). Whether or not this was done on purpose to exclude the people from Urk is impossible to determine, but it does at least light up the fire of the ongoing neighbourhood quarrel.

The EIA, as mentioned above, is an important document within the process of the construction of the park; it has to be approved, and it provides the ultimate opportunity for protesting groups to stop the construction works if they can prove that there is something wrong about it, or that the (construction of) the park will have unacceptable impact on the environment. Up until the time of the interviews it was not clear when this EIA would be available, a lack of communication which was very much denounced by the representatives of Urk (De Vries, Bogerd). In a later e-mail (25 June 2009) Mrs. De Vries gave notion that on Monday June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009 members of Urk Briest had a meeting with representatives of the Stuurgroep and that it was made clear to them when the EIA will be available; a sign that the information provision is indeed improving.

Within her job Mrs. Appels strives for more openness and transparency; however, it seems as if this comes in too late. From the side of the initiators of the project various drawings and animations of the future park have been made in an attempt to inform the public, but the opponents simply do not believe these images. As mentioned before, according to the opponents the drawings of the initiators do not represent the actual situation and so they have made their own sketches. Of course both parties say that their drawings are most real and accuse the other party of manipulating the truth<sup>41</sup>. This in the end comes down to the

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<sup>41</sup> See: <http://www.nd.nl/artikelen/2009/april/09/windmolens-leiden-tot-propagandaoorlog> (30 June 2009) only available in Dutch.

neighbourhood quarrel described before in which it is nothing more than a yes-no argumentation.

Bell et al. (2005) indicate that providing information is an important part of the development process, but they also present some limitations. In the first place the 'information must be accessible and comprehensible' (Bell et al. 2005, p. 469), a point which seems to improve in the Noordoostpolder; secondly the '*web of belief*<sup>42</sup>' of each individual is different, which means that each individual creates his own interpretation of the information that has been given, based on experience and knowledge; and thirdly information will always be mistrusted (Bell et al. 2005). Therefore building trust, established through a participatory process is vital (Bell et al. 2005). It can thus be said that it is not only important for the initiators of the windmill park to provide the public with information, but to establish a healthy relationship through participation to ensure that the information that is provided will also be trusted by the public.

A problem which also occurred in relation to the communication towards the public was that the type of information was wrong. In the beginning it was a merely technical story that was presented to the people while they were not informed about the values and benefits of the park and of wind energy in general (Louter, interview). In order to generate a broader social support it is necessary to communicate the need of a project first, before getting into the technicalities (Louter, interview).

The purpose of hiring a communication expert was to change the direction of the information that is presented to the public from a technical story about how big the windmills will be and how many there will be build into a story about sustainable development, solving the climate

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<sup>42</sup> The concept of web of belief was introduced by Quine and Ullian in 1970 (*The Web of Belief*. New York: Random House).

crisis and the creation of a durable and livable society for our children (Louter, interview). In this way this the social support for the project could be increased, due to an overall concern about climate issues.

At least as important is that the provision of proper information gives the public the idea that you respect them (Appels, interview). One can not simply impose something like a windmill park on a society, you have to take people seriously, and tell them what will happen, be open, and give them the feeling that you respect them' (Appels, interview).

Proper communication towards the public (public information) can be used as a tool to increase acceptance and therewith enlarge the social support: 'familiarity and understanding tend to increase tolerance and acceptance' (Dear 1992). This public information can take different forms. Dear sets apart *Community Education*, in which the general public is informed via TV, radio, leaflets, etc. and *Community Outreach*, in which a meeting with representatives of the citizens is planned. To a certain extend both of these methods of public information are present in the current communication strategy of the initiators of the windmill park (e.g. the printed news cards (see Windmolenpark Noordoostpolder 2009) and the information caravan). However, this still implies a top-down planning while, (as do Bell et al. (2005)), Wolsink recognizes a 'need for a collaborative approach in making wind power implementation effective' (Wolsink 2007, p. 2702). But despite this need for a collaborative approach it must also be noted that Wolsink also acknowledges that opposing groups often do not want to cooperate.

While an increase in information supply seems by all means desirable the institutions of the Dutch law also make this hard to do. As long as one does not have a '*grondpositie*' (*ground*

*position*: when the location/the ground is acquired) it is frankly impossible to communicate the plans, because anybody can steal the ideas and contact the ground owners to acquire the position. Therefore every initiator will first acquire the *grondpositie*, and based on the locations he/she can get request a building permit. This, in the Netherlands institutionalized, dilemma makes it almost impossible to communicate your plans before they are in an advanced state (Jansen, interview).

To get back to the original question of the thesis, has there been public engagement? Based on the theory it can be concluded that public information is a type of engagement, although it is a weak kind, and that this type of engagement can result in a broader acceptance. But if we look at the public information process in the Noordoostpolder it is inevitable to conclude that, definitely in the past, the information provision has been rather poor. With the attraction of a communication agency in the project it is likely that the stream of information will be improved and that also the kind of information will be adjusted. Though it is not possible yet to evaluate the actual contribution, and it must be kept in mind that the information diffusion started up so late that it will become hard to convince the public (especially the people of Urk) of the need for this windmill park and to get the increased acceptance and broader public support they aim for. Furthermore, Bell et al. (2005) teach us that the information that is provided will always be mistrusted and therefore higher levels of participation are desirable, but although Wolsink (2007) agrees on this he also states that true opponents (as we should consider Urk Briest and the municipality Urk) are often not inclined to cooperate.

### 4.3. Financial participation

The third form of participation as it could be observed in the case of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder is the financial participation; this once again illustrates a predicament in the nomenclature. By now it must have become clear that the term participation is understood differently by different people<sup>43</sup>. Public participation (or better public engagement) until now was only related to decision-making and the development of plans. In the case of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder an additional type of public participation can be identified<sup>44</sup>. It will also be made possible to participate financially in the project.

Unfortunately it is not clear at this point in the process how this financial participation will look in the end; and this can not be known yet because of the legal system in the Netherlands. The law that is active at the moment the windmills will be build and the public can actively participate financially, determines what type of participation system can be applied (Wijnia-Lemstra, De Groot, interviews).

The underlying principles for the introduction of the financial participation in the Noordoostpolder can be seen very much in line with the reasons why also other types of engagement are often applied, namely the increase of acceptance and the increase of public support (Thomas 1995); in other words, to decrease the NIMBY-reactions, as mentioned earlier, and to get a more equal distribution of the interests and the troubles (Van Zuylen et al. 1999). In the case of the Noordoostpolder the original thought was not only to offer the

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<sup>43</sup> Van Zuylen et al. (1999) show that, in The Netherlands amongst people that are involved in wind energy, the Dutch word '*participatie*', is most often associated with financial participation.

<sup>44</sup> In addition to these two forms of engagement there can even be a third type of public engagement, this is engagement in science and technology. This means that the public is not only involved in the (science and technology) policy, but in the actual making of science and technology. For example in the case of '*constructive technology assessment*' in which technology developers and technology users are brought together in the R&D phase (Joss 1999), see also Hamstra (1995) and Van Eijndhoven (1997). Involving the end user in the development process is also a very important aspect of the industrial design education I come from; an interesting and relevant text in this area is Jelsma (2002) who searches for a balance in the role of the user/public.

possibility of financial participation in the project to the people that live nearby the park as a means of compensation for the nuisance though.

When the plans for one concentrated windmill park were made, i.e. when the local government prohibited the construction of solitaire turbines on farmyards, it suddenly became impossible for farmers to harvest wind on their own land, therefore the municipality Noordoostpolder stated that financial participation had to become an integral part of the plans for a concentrated windmill park (Arnoldy, interview).

While the financial participation in the Noordoostpolder still seems to be in its infancy it is very hard to tell how successful this endeavour will be, and whether it will actually contribute to the acceptance and social support for the project; after all the scientific evidence for this is poor. A study done by the University of Groningen and Gothenburg University shows that economic benefits decrease the perceived sound annoyance of a windmill<sup>45,46</sup>. However, to conclude that the overall acceptance of a windmill park increases with the introduction of financial participation is dangerous. The study does show that economic benefits reduce the perceived annoyance of a windmill, but it does not tell about the minimal required amount of financial gain that is needed. Furthermore this research was solely focused on noise perception and annoyance, and it does not tell about one of the main concerns of the inhabitants of Urk, namely the visual intrusion of the landscape.

Despite the lack of hard scientific evidence there are good reasons to believe in the growth of social support after the introduction of financial participation. As the case of Denmark shows, engaging the public in the construction of a windmill via financial participation and local

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<http://www.rug.nl/wewi/dewetenschapswinkels/natuurkunde/onderzoek/windfarmperceptionproject/aanbevelingen/index> (2 June 2009)

<sup>46</sup> Van Zuylen et al. (1999) also comment that: 'the noise of a wind turbine proves pleasant if there is a yearly dividend' (p. 1), but their source can not be verified.

ownership can help to increase social support and can even establish commitment to the project (Toke 2002, Jakobsen 2008).

To what extent this will also happen in the Noordoostpolder is hard to tell and can only be speculated. There is good hope that especially the group of people that do not hold very strong opinions about the construction of the park will get more involved in the project, and perhaps start to support the windmills so that a broader overall social support emerges, but the chance that it will persuade the real opponents to accept the park must be considered small (Louter, interview).

An additional problem which has to be kept in mind is that the initial idea for the financial participation stems from the municipality Noordoostpolder. For them, as indicated earlier, the main point to integrate possibilities for this form of participation was to offer the local farmers a compensation for their loss of income if they would not be allowed to build a solitaire turbine on their land anymore. In the covenant (made in 2002) about wind energy the municipality in addition expressed that it should become possible for citizens of the Noordoostpolder to participate financially (Arnoldy, interview). Since a small number of the windmills that will be placed outside the dike at the Noordermeerdijk have to be placed in a part of the IJsselmeer that belongs to the municipality Lemsterland, also the citizens of this municipality shall be offered the possibility to get financially involved in the project (Arnoldy, interview).

It is not very sure whether it will actually be possible to involve the citizens of Urk in the financial participation. According to Mr. Arnoldy of the municipality Noordoostpolder it has become clear that they should get involved too (after all, the windmills will get closer to the people of Urk than to the majority of the inhabitants of the Noordoostpolder), but how to do this is once again a legal challenge. In the covenant between the municipality Noordoostpolder and the Platform (the predecessor of the Koepel) of 2002 it was originally only agreed to have

financial participation for the inhabitants of the Noordoostpolder. Mr. Arnoldy now questions (and is trying to find out) whether excluding inhabitants of the neighbouring municipalities would not mean that they are discriminated, but once they are included them, can the rest of the Netherlands, or maybe even Europe as a whole be excluded from participation?

Based on the websites of the Stuurgroep and the Koepel it seems uncertain whether the inhabitants of the neighbouring municipalities will be in a position to participate financially. While the website of the Koepel mentions that it will become possible for the inhabitants of the Noordoostpolder to participate, and that 'participation will also be offered to the municipality Lemsterland'<sup>47</sup>, the website of the Stuurgroep is less certain whether Lemsterland can really participate. However they also mention a hypothetical possibility for the citizens of Urk: 'We also examine the possibility for inhabitants of Urk and Lemsterland to take part.'<sup>48</sup>

Within the information process that was mentioned before the financial participation could also play an important role (Appels, interview<sup>49</sup>). In the attempts of the initiators of the windmill park to gain more acceptance the role of financial participation could be rather important. It is therefore also vital to be able to inform the public about this, but that can not that simply be done. Because of legal restrictions the Stuurgroep and the Koepel are not allowed to say much about the possibilities for financial participation. It has already been mentioned that the exact form in which the public can get involved financially can not be known until all the permits are granted and the Raad van State has allowed the construction of the park (De Groot, Wijnia-Lemstra, interviews). And as long as it is not known how the financial participation will get shaped it is also not allowed to communicate about this (Wijnia-Lemstra, interview). This means that it is possible to say that the possibility for financial

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/project.php?cid=29> (25 June 2009).

<sup>48</sup> [http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/?page\\_id=89](http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/?page_id=89) (25 June 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Appels: 'I am waiting till I can [communicate about the financial participation], because it is such a great chance, and chance for the project.'



participation will come, and that it is being investigated, but it is not possible to provide more information about this, and it is also not possible to sign up for it yet. As mentioned before, on the websites of the Stuurgroep and the Koepel the option for financial participation is mentioned, and via [http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/?page\\_id=89](http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/?page_id=89) one can express one's interest, but the only thing this means so far is that the name will be added to a list, and as soon as there is more information available one will be contacted (Appels, interview).

Although the exact form of the financial participation to be applied in this case is not known yet, it is possible to take a brief look at some of the alternatives that might be available (knowing that by the time the park will actually be constructed there might be other options as well). Without getting too much into juristic and fiscal technicalities it is only important to mention here that it would be possible to invest in a direct and private manner, but also in the shape of a juristic entity or via a financing instrument such as for example a bond loan (Paardekooper and De Jong 2002, Van Duijvenvoorde 2009, Van Zuylen et al. 1999<sup>50</sup>). The choice for either of these options determines also the fiscal and tax system, and since changes in these systems might occur and thus different alternatives might turn out more profitable than others, it is still impossible for the initiators in the Noordoostpolder to make a final decision in this.

To conclude this chapter on the financial participation in the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder it must be stated that this official participation track is not advanced enough to determine whether it actually contributes to the overall acceptance of and social support

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<sup>50</sup> Van Zuylen et al. (1999) conclude that (in 1999) in one third of the existing projects there has been some form of cooperation, however they also include the 7% of the total capacity that has been build with money from 'Groene Stroom' (Green energy), in this case consumers do choose for environmental friendly energy, and therewith invest in sustainable development of RES, but they can not even chose which park they want to invest in.

for the windmill park. The scientific evidence that could support the predictions that it will do so is also very limited, but practical experiences show that it at least has reasonable potential (see for example the success of local ownership in Denmark (Toke 2002, Jakobsen 2008)) although in relation to this institutional and cultural aspects have also been very important in the Danish case (Hård and Jamison 2005), and economic compensation does not guarantee social support (Jakobsen 2008)<sup>51</sup>.

However, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the meaning of the term *participation* is very ambivalent, and in an attempt to deal with this the concept of public *engagement* was adopted (after Rowe and Frewer 2005). In chapter 2.1 public engagement was defined as: *The process of engaging members of the public (citizens), individually or in (organized) groups, in (any phase of) policy-making, and therewith sharing in the power.* Based on this definition financial participation does not have anything to do with public engagement as it was intended in this research; there is not even a one-directional flow of any kind of information. 'In the case of financial participation the participants, being citizens and companies, are offered the possibility to participate financially in a windpark. In the case of financial participation the participant has no voice in the wind park' (Van Duijvenvoorde 2009, p. 3)<sup>52</sup>. Therefore it can not even be considered a mild form of engagement as it is intended in the range of this paper and definitely no participation; even though it can lead to more social support and commitment and can therefore be an important factor in spatial planning issues.

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<sup>51</sup> Jakobsen refers to a study by Thele, unfortunately Thele's original work is written in Norwegian (Thele, F. (2008) *Vindkraft i Motvind - Kontroversen om Havlund-prosjektene*. In Hanson, J. & Wicken, O. (Eds.), *Rik på natur: Innovasjon i en ressursbasert kunnskapsøkonomi*. Bergen, NO: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.).

<sup>52</sup> It must be noted that Van Duijvenvoorde concludes his memorandum by summarizing some windmill participation projects in the Netherlands, in most of these cases we can speak of *participation in exploitation*, this means that those that are involved in the exploitation (i.e. also financially) do have a voice in the development of the windmill (park).

#### 4.4. Local farmers initiated the project

In the 1990s it were local farmers that saw financial benefits in harvesting wind energy in the Noordoostpolder (like their colleagues in the rest of Flevoland), but the municipality did not allow these farmers to build solitaire wind turbines on their farmyard since it was afraid to get a messy landscape with a diversity of windmills spread out over the countryside,. Furthermore can solitaire windmills not make the net stronger and are they less efficient because of the subdivided infrastructure (Lakeman and Zijlstra 2004). The municipality wanted to concentrate the wind energy production on their land at one location (Arnoldy, interview). At this point the municipality, after various studies, pointed out the location for the windmill park (De Groot, interview).

The local farmers, who, from the first moment on wanted to construct windmills, have not been involved in the choice for this location though (Wijnia-Lemstra, interview; Nijenhuis, e-mail). The municipality carefully considered the location and carried out landscape analyses (Lakeman and Zijlstra 2004; De Groot, interview), but they did not involve the public in this choice.

Although up until today the farmers, united in the different partner-groups, are still involved in the project this lack of getting a say in the choice of the location is already remarkable, and it is therefore also hard to use the fact that local farmers initiated the project as an argument for public engagement.

Mr. Nijenhuis, one of the farmers who is involved in one of these partner-groups (Westermeerwind B.V.) confirmed that he as an individual did not have a say in the location of the windmills, and which of the mills would be owned by him and his group, however the persons in charge of Westermeerwind B.V. were involved in this on his behalf. He does find that he has been informed well enough throughout the development of the plans.

It must be recognized that the group of people that is involved in this project is so extensive that it is not possible to congregate with all of them and discuss the plans. This will have to be done with representatives of all these individuals. However, the problem remains that only referring to the farmers is not a sign of real public involvement, even though these farmers might be many, they form one *advocacy coalition* (Sabatier 1988) which means that they 'share a set of normative and causal beliefs and (...) often act in concert' (Sabatier 1998, p. 133) and 'seek to manipulate the rules, budgets, and personnel of governmental institutions in order to achieve these goals over time' (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1993, p. 5). Other advocacy coalitions, such as the one formed by the opponents, are not heard.

The argument did come up during the interviews that there are also many people in favour of this wind park because they are involved in it as initiators and that there might be more in favour than against the construction (Louter, interview); in a purely democratic system where the group with the most followers wins this could be a valid argument.

Taking a bit of a historical view on policy-making in the Netherlands though this is not a common way of arguing in the Dutch culture. The Netherlands is famous for its '*polder model*' in which cooperation, consensus and democratic self-rule is aimed for (Schreuder 2001). Knowing this it is at least a little odd that the public has not been involved in the making of the plans and the choice of the location in the Noordoostpolder. A problem which project manager Mr. Louter is also aware of: 'There must be social support, complicated processes, everybody around the table, etc. well that is the typical Dutch way, the polder model. But subsequently we do not know how to apply that polder model in these situations.'

Here, once again, one could argue that it is hard to get everybody involved, and to reach consensus, but there are various ways in which the public can be involved. One method for example, which is also very much supported by the municipality Urk, would be to set up a citizen panel in which a few representatives of the people of the Noordoostpolder and the neighbouring municipalities are involved (Bogerd, interview). These citizens could discuss together what a proper location for the windmill park would be, and give advice to the municipality.

Although talking about public engagement in science and sustainability assessment the Integrated Assessment (IA) focus groups described by Kasemir et al. (2003b) provide an example of how such a citizen panel could be constructed. One of the main advantages of the use of a focus group is that qualitative data can be obtained in an interactive context and in which through social dynamics multiple perspectives can be observed and compared (Kasemir, Jaeger and Jäger 2003a). A consensus conference is very much comparable to the IA focus groups of Kasemir et al.; only the group is generally slightly bigger, and the construction of the sessions is a little different. Furthermore a consensus conference is more open to the public (Grundahl 1995). Both in the case of a consensus conference as well as in the case of an IA focus group it is important that the group is heterogeneous in order to prevent biased outcomes (Kasemir et al. 2003a, Grundahl 1995) (Kasemir et al. 2003a advice to form multiple focus groups to prevent this). By selecting a heterogeneous group of people which represents a cross-section of the residents it can be ensured that an as large as possible part of the population is represented in the project.

The outcome of the consensus conference and the IA focus group is an advice to the policy-makers; this basically means that there is still no real public participation. The final report of the citizen panel (focus group, consensus conference) provides a one-directional flow of

information from the public to the policy-makers and can therefore be seen as public *consultation*.

In the case of public consultation it is still up to the policy-makers to take the final decision, so they still decide on their own whether or not they want to follow the citizens' advice. However, institutionalizing a citizen panel would give the people an official voice and would therewith create a second advocacy coalition.

As a concluding remark it can be said that the argument that local farmers initiated the project and are still involved in the development of the windmill park do not serve as a convincing argument for public engagement. The farmers form one advocacy coalition, a similar advocacy coalition could exist which represents the public (as described above this would include citizens of the Noordoostpolder and neighbouring municipalities, but it could also be that Urk forms a separate coalition). The visions of these coalitions often compete and a third party would be needed to find a compromise (Sabatier 1988). To find a third party in the case of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder that can take this role of '*policy broker*' (Sabatier 1988, p. 133) would also not be easy. The Stuurgroep might be most suited, but the farmers, united in the Koepel take part in this group, just like the governments, for whom the park is also very important (on a national level to reach the sustainability goals and on a local level the municipality must fear claims by the farmers who have not been able to harvest wind with a solitaire windmill and might lose even more income if the park will not be build (De Vries, interview)).

The organization of the Koepel can be seen as a feudal system. The farmers that are involved do not have a say in the actual developments of the plans anymore (although they are informed about the progress satisfactorily (Nijenhuis, e-mail)), and the people living in the

surrounding areas are not involved in the process at all. It can always be questioned whether involvement of the public in a project like this is necessary (although the literature suggests it is), or whether such a large group of initiators is in favour and thus according to democratic principles outvotes the needs for public engagement. But, public engagement by means of establishing another advocacy coalition, possibly in a citizen panel would have been optional, and could have caused a much broader acceptance and social support than a focus on the local (initiating) farmers alone.

#### 4.5. Haarlemmermeer<sup>53</sup>

Without making too much of a detour from the original content of this paper it is considered interesting to contrast the story of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder with the one in the Haarlemmermeer. The Haarlemmermeer is praised for its high level of public engagement and provides a good example of how it is possible to involve the public more in the development of a windmill park, and which also helps to create a broader social support.

In the case of the Haarlemmermeer it was also the municipality (after careful evaluation of all options) that selected the location; however they only indicated a *search area* in the South of the Haarlemmermeer and assigned the cooperation to develop three plans for a windmill park. The municipality is not financially involved in the project, but they do facilitate the process: 'By investing time and dedication as municipality in social support, involvement, quality and education in this project now, we hope to prevent a lot of delays and necessary municipality effort in juridical procedures in the end' (Haarlemmermeer 2006, p. 5). The cooperation consists of the farmers that are located within the search area who all get involved (also

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<sup>53</sup> The information provided in this chapter presents a very brief summary of the project and is based mainly on the 'Plan van Aanpak Windenergie' (Strategy wind energy) (Haarlemmermeer 2006).

financially); therewith the problem of the ground positions can be overcome (for the actual developments of the plans and the park a core group is set up (Van Duijvenvoorde 2009)).

When the different plans have been developed the communication phase can be entered. Besides providing information about the three designs<sup>54</sup> also additional information about the procedures, public hearing and appeal opportunities, as well as environment and inconvenience measurements are communicated. As with any large construction in the Netherlands a public hearing is arranged, and subsequently the public has the opportunity to vote for the best option. Based on the outcome of this, and the outcome of information meetings, conversations with village and municipality councils and the advice of a special advisory board, the project group<sup>55</sup> will choose the best option.

Already before the official licensing and public hearing moments the public got involved by intensive communication and the inhabitants were involved in the selection of the final design (Van Duijvenvoorde 2009). Research by The SmartAgent Company (2009) has shown that most people prefer to get a choice between a number of designs by means of a referendum as form of engagement; in this way the process in the Haarlemmermeer has not only given the public an opportunity to express their opinion, but the method also seems to be most suitable<sup>56</sup>.

Finally the project in the Haarlemmermeer gives the opportunity for financial participation to the farmers (with an extra compensation for those who will ultimately have the windmills placed on their land) and to the inhabitants.

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<sup>54</sup> In which a lot of attention is given to visual presentations, including a scale model for each of the designs.

<sup>55</sup> Present in the project group are: the municipality, Senternovem, Meerboeren and Meerwind (<http://www.haarlemmermeer.nl/dsresource?objectid=2401&type=org> 6 June 2009).

<sup>56</sup> The SmartAgent Company does not say whether full control in these referendums is necessary though, in the example of the Haarlemmermeer that is not the case.



## 5. Public participation and windmill park Noordoostpolder

So has there been any real public participation in the development of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder? The answer to this question must, based on all the above, of course be no; at least there has not been any *deliberative interaction* in the planning process, and even other forms of public engagement are very limited. Only the type of engagement with the least influence for the public (public information) can be found in the Noordoostpolder, and more activity in this direction is starting to emerge. For a long time the development of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder has been a very closed process, and even when the ideas for the construction of the park came out the communication towards the public was minimal, and with a 'wrong tone of voice' (Louter, interview). However, since November 2008 a communication expert has been attracted to change this. The result of these efforts is hard to measure though since the actual elaboration of the communication strategies has only recently begun (Appels, interview). Very shortly after the interviews were conducted, the information caravan has started in an attempt to provide more openness to the public. This seems to be a good and important initiative since it is likely that more information will also lead to more acceptance and social support (Dear 1992, Bell et al. 2005), but it must be noted that it actually got started too late.

The second and third layer of public engagement, public consultation and public participation, have not, or only very limited, been part of the development of the windmill park. The Koepel has done research in which societal organizations were involved, e.g. their research on the area's bat population; here the Vereniging voor Zoogdierkunde en Zoogdierbescherming (association for mammal knowledge and mammal protection) has participated. But other relevant organizations such as Vogelbescherming Nederland (bird protection) have been involved less.

Besides the public information this paper has presented three other forms of 'participation' present in the Noordoostpolder. It must be said that these three, although sometimes called participation, should not be considered as such. In the first place the legal trajectory in the Netherlands provides some opportunities for citizens to express their thoughts and objections about a construction work. This can be seen at least in theory as a form of public consultation; however, in practice people can also not put forward much influence via this route. Opponents would have to be able to prove that there is some kind of problem related to the construction of the park that weighs heavy enough for a judge to decide not to grant permission. These objections need a legal base, and since the initiators know this, they will prepare for this and try to eliminate any legal ground for objections, and can therewith, in line with Dear's (1992) autonomous approach, overcome the protests from the locals (supported by the governments for whom the development of the park is very important).

Furthermore the project offers the possibility for financial participation; however, this is the clearest sign with regards to the nomenclature predicament. The public engagement this thesis is concerned with is the engagement on the level of policy making and planning; yet financial participation is a form of participation, in which the participants have no voice in the development of the plans (Van Zuylen et al. 1999, Van Duijvenvoorde 2009). Therefore this does provide an opportunity to involve the public in the project; it is a potential base for increasing acceptance and social support, but it should not be seen as public engagement.

Finally there were the local farmers that initiated the project; they might be a large group, and they might still support the project, but they form only one advocacy coalition. And besides, these farmers, who before the 1990s could build their own windmill on their own land, now have no say anymore in the development of the park. They did not have any choice in the location of the park (this was decided by the municipality Noordoostpolder), and now only have a role in the development of the park via the project partners. Therewith the role and the

influence of the farmers has been diminished to a very low level and can hardly be seen as any form of engagement.

### 5.1. Reasons for this lack of participation?

It is hard to tell what the reasons for this lack of participation have been (assuming that in general participation is a good thing, and that it does provide a broader social support (Van Zuylen et al. 1999)). A number of possible explanations are feasible, but within the scope of this research it is hard and rather impossible to make a distinctive conclusion. Factors that could be identified are:

- In the beginning the members of the council in the Noordoostpolder reached a unanimous decision about the construction of a concentrated windmill park
- Participation is institutionalized in the Dutch law, and on legal grounds the initiators only need to follow this in order to receive the required permits
- The Dutch legal system makes it difficult to publish plans at an early stage because of *'grondposities'* (ownership of the needed locations)
- The demand for a financial participation possibility (initiated by the municipality Noordoostpolder) may have given the impression that everyone could get involved, and it may have given false hope that the support would get larger
- There have been problems with regarding communication
- The large group of farmers involved may have given a feeling of democratic majority
- And finally little was known about how to effectively apply the infamous Dutch polder model in this situation

## 5.2. The national government's plans for increased participation

The development of renewable energy in order to ensure sustainable growth is very important to the government, and the generation of wind energy plays a crucial role in reaching their goals (VROM 2008a, 2008b, 2009). In order to achieve the productivity goals for wind energy set by this cabinet the construction of the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder is rather crucial (the government wants to permit licenses for another 2000 MW of extra wind energy within their term (the cabinet term ends in 2011), the park in the Noordoostpolder would correspond to 20-25% of this (Windpark Noordoostpolder 2009)), and minister Van der Hoeven (Economic Affairs) has threatened to use her power to overrule to make sure the park will be built<sup>57</sup>. On the other hand the government, and especially the ministry of VROM is very much in favour of public engagement, and they also seem to realize that for sustainable development this is vital.

However, the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder is not a part of the national government's efforts to integrate public engagement in the planning phase. The government makes a clear distinction between short-term projects (those for which the license should be permitted within this cabinet term) and long term plans (Schilp and Stapels, interview). Since it still is the goal to authorize the construction of the park within this cabinet term (2011), it is not part of the government's efforts to involve the public. Although the government is involved in the project (through the Stuurgroep), they are not concerned with public engagement in this case.

In the Dutch policy-making, citizen involvement has become a part of the process. In the development of the new spatial prospect for the Netherlands citizen participation is part of the policy process; citizens have closely been (and are still) involved in the spatial planning with regards to finding proper locations to exploit wind energy, but the plans for the park in

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<sup>57</sup> Minister Van der Hoeven expressed this February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009 on BNR radio: <http://www.bnr.nl/artikel/10979381/minister-drukt-windmolenpark-urk> (9 July 2009); even before she actually got the power to overrule since that got in place on 1 March 2009.

the Noordoostpolder are not a part of this since they already existed (Stapels, interview). These short-term visions (for spatial planning) are developed on a local/regional level therefore the local governments are responsible; the long-term visions are developed by the national government, and in this citizens do get involved (Schilp, e-mail).

For the long-term policy goals with regards to renewable energy, and especially wind energy, public engagement is valued highly, and active processes to establish this have been put to a start. This public engagement process has been rather intensive, starting broadly with discussions in an internet community and narrowing down to a *winddag* (wind day) in which concrete plans/ideas are developed. Although in general these ideas are only used as advice, and one thus has to speak about public consultation rather than participation, some of the ideas turned out very useful and might be adopted.

In the future, it is the intention to apply citizen engagement nation-wide and every civil servant should consider whether public engagement is desirable, and which type and level of engagement is best (Stapels, interview). It must be recognized though that it is up to the policy-maker to decide to engage the public, and therewith the ultimate power is still in his/her hands (in line with Thomas 1990 and Shand and Arnberg (see Bishop and Davis 2002)).



## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the role of the public in the development of a windmill park in the Netherlands; and to see which lessons can be learned from the case of the Noordoostpolder. In order to answer this two-folded question in the first place the theoretical background of the concept of public engagement had to be explored. It turned out that public engagement can take many forms and has different levels, and all too often public involvement is mistakenly called public participation.

Building on the work of Rowe and Frewer (2005) and the OECD (2001a, 2001b, 2003) the term public engagement was adopted as the overall umbrella, covering public information, public consultation and public participation. Public engagement has been defined as: *The process of engaging members of the public (citizens), individually or in (organized) groups, either intended or unintended, in (any phase of) policy-making, and therewith sharing in the power.* Participation is only a part of this, and relies on a *deliberative interaction* between the policy-makers and the public.

This paper has shown, based on theory and practical examples of other windmill projects that it can be desirable to engage the public in the planning of a windmill park. It is important throughout the project to communicate well with the locals, and offer them the opportunity to express their thoughts about the development. By a participative and cooperative approach it is possible to create higher acceptance and a wider social support for a windmill park (Dear 1992, Bell et al. 2005, Wolsink 2007), even though true opponents might not be willing to cooperate (Wolsink 2007). Better participation with the public also better facilitates the process and might render difficult juridical processes superfluous (Van Zuylen et al. 1999).

The public can have both positive and negative influence on the development of a windmill park. But while the majority of the Dutch citizens favours wind energy for sustainable development (Mobach 2009, The SmartAgent Company 2009) NIMBY-reactions emerge in concrete cases, and many get blocked (Bosch et al. 2008). In these cases it seems as if the public has a mainly negative influence on the development of wind energy, however by practicing a more open and collaborative approach the public can also be engaged to the benefit of a windmill park (see the Danish case, or the example of the Haarlemmermeer).

Various methods could be applied to involve the public, for example the citizen panel as suggested by Mr. Bogerd of the municipality Urk. Based merely on this research it can not be concluded which method is preferable, but a referendum in which the public can choose between a limited number of options seems one of the better alternatives (The SmartAgent Company 2009). And although the specific method that is to be applied can not be determined, and might differ from case to case, it is important to engage the public throughout the entire process so that they will not get the feeling of a top-down imposed plan (Wolsink 2007).

For successful public engagement to take place there are a number of barriers that need to be overcome. In the first place the question of how to involve the public is one that can not be answered straightforwardly. Many others have already claimed that this is different for every case, and the case of the Noordoostpolder has not really been able to contribute to this question. Only has it shown that there still is a lack of knowledge about how to engage the public, i.e. how to apply a *polder model*. Furthermore there is an institutionalized dilemma of the *grondposities*, meaning that one can not communicate the plans unless the ground has been acquired and the position is assured. This means that it is dangerous to communicate about a plan in its development-stage because others can steal the idea, resulting in a hidden



development of the plans which then get imposed on the public. In the case of the Haarlemmermeer that could be avoided by including all the ground landlords from the first moment.

#### 6.1. Will the park be built?

This question is very hard to answer at this point. The Koepel is very careful, and although they might overpass the public in their work, they play the game by the law. There are still various problems that have to be overcome, because not only will the opponents such as Urk Briest and the municipality Urk use the opportunity to go to the Raad van State to stop the development of the plans, but also nature organizations such as Vogelbescherming Nederland (bird protection) are critical towards (parts of) the plan. Despite this the initiators of the park are very positive and the website of the Stuurgroep states that the 'tentative conclusion [of the EIA] is that there are no impediments that obstruct the wind park<sup>58</sup>.

However, as Mr. Jansen of Senternovem also pointed out, within the Koepel there are five organizations that develop different parts of the park. Mr. Jansen, although very much in favour of wind energy and hoping the park can be built, is very critical about this set-up; however he identifies a stronger cohesion and a trend of the five different organizations to becoming one entity. But as the plans are now, the investments and the outputs of the park are not equally divided, making it likely that only the lines on land become profitable.

But in the end it must also be recognized that minister Van der Hoeven (Economic Affairs) has already expressed that if the process in the Noordoostpolder remains as troublesome as it is,

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<sup>58</sup> [http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/?page\\_id=7#009](http://www.windparknoordoostpolder.nl/?page_id=7#009) (13 July 2009).

she will use her power to overrule to make sure that the project can be carried out as this park is very important for the government to reach its sustainability goals<sup>59</sup>.

## 6.2. Recommendations

Based on the empirical research as well as the theoretical work a number of recommendations with regards to better engagement of the public in order to establish a wider social support could be given to the initiators of the windmill park. But it must be noted that the project has gotten into such an advanced state now that these probably come too late. The only thing that still seems feasible is (as recognized by Mrs. Appels) to inform the public as good as possible, and show them respect by which mutual trust might still be established.

Perhaps the public can also still get involved in the choice of the type of windmill which might reduce the public's impression of a top-down imposed project. The developments surrounding the park so far may have given the public a sense of unfair development where an open and participatory approach could have taken this feeling away and could have granted more social support (Wolsink 2007). However, to be frank, it seems as if this point has been passed (both on the side of the initiators who have advanced plans, as on the side of the opponents who are not likely to trust the initiators anymore).

It is of course quite impossible to derive general conclusions and give recommendations for other similar projects based on only one case study. However according to the literature, the windmill park in the Noordoostpolder and the small detour to the windmill park in the Haarlemmermeer we can conclude that windmills do have an impact on society, and that it is

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<sup>59</sup> A dispute within the government which plays outside the scope of this paper, but which is worth mentioning here involves minister Van der Hoeven (EZ) and minister Plasterk (OCW). Minister Plasterk has given Urk the title *Protected view of the village* and supports the people from Urk in their idea that windmills harm the view of the village, it is uncertain how this dispute will end (even though it is likely that Van der Hoeven will come out on top).

therefore important that the public gets involved in the development of the construction plans. By doing so, feelings of unfair processes can be reduced and a wider social support can be established (Wolsink 2007). In the Netherlands two thirds of the plans to build a windmill never get realized, often because of problems at the local level (Bosch et al. 2008). By engaging the public in an early stage of the development process it becomes possible to create a broader social acceptance and take away some of the objections that might get in the way of the development of a windmill (park).

However, when looking at other renewable energy systems the involvement of the public is often smaller, if not completely absent. This is not surprising as windmills have a lot bigger impact on society compared to for example solar cells which can just be put on the roof of a building. However in the case of large solar power plants or biomass power plants similar societal reactions could be expected (Wolsink 2007) which indicates a need for proper collaboration between the initiators and the public in order to ensure the success of renewable energy systems, but this is a question which is merely related to spatial planning than to RES as such.

### 6.3. Further research

This project has shown that there is still a great diversity in the meaning of the concept of public participation. By following the distinction of Rowe and Frewer (2005) some progress could be made already in this field, while the financial participation as described in this work adds another meaning to the term. Additional work to better distinguish in the theoretical backbone underlines this may be desirable.

Next there is the public engagement in practice in the Netherlands. As this project has show, it is far from something that goes without saying; even though the Dutch government wants it to

be (in the future citizen engagement should become a part of all fields of government). Especially in spatial planning issues, which large scale RES are, engaging the public seems very important and since it is still vague how to successfully apply this more effort can be put in it.

Another interesting direction for future research is how initiatives from the public influence the development of other RES. The municipality Urk has for example put a lot of effort into the development of other types of RES to replace the windmills. This work (which is also supported by the members of Urk Briest) might lead to an increased progression of other types of RES; this type of public engagement in RES (only indirectly related to spatial planning issues) can be very interesting from an STS perspective.

Third, the project of the windmill park itself can be the subject of a variety of studies. Although this research has given some new insights in public engagement in the Netherlands, the windmill park is still in a development phase, so it would be interesting to repeat this research exercise after the actual building process has begun, to find out how the development has progressed, and to see whether the windmill park can actually be built (after all many still believe or hope that the park will not succeed), and of course to see whether changes have occurred with regards to the engagement of the public and their acceptance of the park.

The windmill park can additionally be studied from a variety of angles, for example the business structure of the Koepel seems very interesting and complicated; the Dutch law can be investigated since that is one of the things limiting the possibilities for engagement. Finally the outcome of the dispute between the minister of education, culture and science (Plasterk) and the minister of economic affairs (Van der Hoeven) might make an interesting study from a political side of view.

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## Appendix A – Interview questions

### Set-up interviews:

The interviews will be semi-structured (*focused interviews* Yin 2009), in other words I will have a list of questions to which I need the answer in the end, but the discussion should be rather open so that more insights can be gained and additional information outside the boundaries of the direct questions can be received.

### Goals / Questions:

- 1) What power do citizens have, in other words, are citizens heard, and to what level?
- 2) Has there been at any time during the development of the plans/making of the policy been interaction with citizens from the surrounding municipalities?
- 3) At which point did citizens get involved?
  - a. Was there a chance for citizens to speak up during the development of the project?
  - b. How was the communication about the project to the citizens while the project was still under construction?
- 4) Which methods of engagement have been used?
  - a. And which level? Information, consultation, participation?
  - b. Could other methods have been applied?
- 5) Which methods did citizens use to get heard?
- 6) Has the project been slowed down because of citizen protests?
  - a. If yes, what were the causes and effects? And what could have been done to prevent such delay?
  - b. If not, what effect have the protests had so far?
- 7) What is the effect of the official participation which is part of the project?
  - a. To the protest groups, does this participation possibility by any means change your point of view? Would a good participation regulation make you willing to accept the windmills?
- 8) Are you aware of the participation goals of the transition management of the Dutch government? How do you think this has played a role throughout the entire process?

- 9) In the past it has been shown that in many cases where there were citizen protests the construction of the windmills has been cancelled, how likely do you think this would be in the case of the Noordoostpolder?
- 10) Recently the committee of Urk Briest has claimed that the construction works for the windmills can danger the strengths of the dikes, how serious does the government and contractor take this warning?
- a. Do you think it will by any chance influence the construction?
  - b. Can this show a form of lay knowledge that can be important in the process, or can this be looked upon as just a trick from the locals to block/delay the construction?
- 11) How has the cooperation between the government – business – citizens been?
- a. Has there been any?



## Appendix B – List of interviews

Janneke Wijnia-Lemstra – Secretary of the Koepel Windenergie Noordoostpolder (Location: Emmeloord; Date: May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009; total duration: 42 minutes)

Marcia Appels – Beaumont Communicatie & Management BV, hired by the Stuurgroep Windpark Noordoostpolder (Lelystad; June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009; 38 minutes)

Lucia de Vries – Urk Briest! (Urk; June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009; 51 minutes)

Maurice Arnoldy – Municipality Noordoostpolder (Emmeloord; June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009; 39 minutes)

Dirk Louter – Managing director of the Stuurgroep Windpark Noordoostpolder (Gorinchem; June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009; 38 minutes)

Anke Stapels – Senior policy-employee education and participation;  
Yigall Schilp – policy-employee involved with wind energy on land of the ministry of VROM (Den Haag; June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009; 72 minutes (Mr. Schilp left after 51 minutes))

Albert Jansen – Senior program advisor Senternovem, wind energy (Utrecht; June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009; 62 minutes)

Anne de Groot – Owner of Ventolines and involved in the development of the windmill park (Emmeloord; June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009; 46 minutes)

M. Bogerd – Municipality Urk, chair of the internal group 'zon en wind' (sun and wind) (Urk; June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2009; 47 minutes)

## Appendix C – Interview overview

Since the interviews were performed in a rather open manner, and not all of the questions were relevant to each interviewee the table below indicates which of the topics have been discussed with whom.

An X indicates that the topic has been discussed; an O means that the topic has been touched upon, but less direct. The overview below does not present any answers to the questions; negative or positive reactions are also not relevant for this overview. Furthermore it must be noted that due to the open-ended style of the interviews also other topics could be discussed, e.g. Mr. Jansen gave a lot of information about the Dutch legal system and Mrs. Stapels explained how citizens are involved in the development of long-term visions for wind energy.

	Mrs. Wijnia-Lemstra	Mrs. Appels	Mrs. De Vries	Mr. Arnoldy	Mr. Louter	Mrs. Stapels	Mr. Schilp <sup>61</sup>	Mr. Jansen	Mr. De Groot	Mr. Bogerd
1 <sup>62</sup>	O	O	O		X			X	O	X
2	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	O	X	X
4	X	X	X	O	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	X	X	X	O	X			O	X	O
6	X	O	X	X	X				O	
7	X	O	X	X	X	O	O	O	X	X
8	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	
9	X		X	O	X			X	X	X
10	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
11	O	O	O	O	O			X	O	X

<sup>61</sup> The interview with Mr. Schilp and Mrs. Stapels were performed together.

<sup>62</sup> Question 1 was more the overall research question, it is too broad to ask at once, the sub-questions had, in most cases, to lead to the answer of this (in many cases this also applied for question 11).

## Appendix D – E-mail contacts

Marcel Nijenhuis – Farmer and member of the Westermeerwindgroep (June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009)

Lucia de Vries – Urk Briest! (June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

Luc Hoogenstein - Senior Coordinator Wetlands of Vogelbescherming Nederland (Bird protection) (July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009)

Yigall Schilp - policy-employee involved with wind energy on land of the ministry of VROM (July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

Appendix E – Location of the Noordoostpolder



Source: <http://www.windkoepelnop.nl/content.php?cid=203> (Retrieved 23 June 2009)

Appendix F – Windmills in Flevoland



Source: own collection

Appendix G – CD